

The Trials of Job

1. The Problem of Suffering

A. Examples:

1. Letter from friend - An Olympic hopeful in soccer has an accident and almost loses a leg. His Olympic hopes are shattered and he blames God.
2. Many Christians suffer great tragedies and heartaches in life.
3. Job's disasters: Satan's challenge of Job's faith leads to a test of his integrity. He is brought under extreme suffering by the loss of family, property, health.

B. What are the basic issues? These are the greatest questions that plague man:

1. Why do the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper?
2. Is all suffering connected with doing wrong?
3. Can God trust man to serve Him simply for righteousness' sake?
4. Can man trust God's care and goodness in the face of suffering?

C. The problem of endurance: Job 1:20-22. Job's initial trust in the midst of disaster gets worn down with time.

2. The Argument of Job's "Friends"

A. In the three cycles of speeches, Job's friends monotonously set forth their premise: Job is suffering as a result of his sin.

1. They have adopted this view to defend God, so rather than give Job the comfort he needs they accuse him of sin.
2. Their view: 4:7-8; 8:1-7, 13; 11:6, 13-20.

B. But Job defends his integrity. He is aware of sin (1:1, 5) but not of such a magnitude that deserves what has befallen him - 7:20-21; 10:5-7. If all sins bring corresponding and immediate punishment then **who can stand** (9:2-3)?

C. The position of the friends is opposed by common observance: the wicked **do** prosper and the righteous **do** suffer - 21:7-16.

3. Job's Complaints Against God

- A. Job feels that God has become his enemy for reasons he does not understand - 10:13-17; 13:24-27.
- B. Job's challenges grow bolder: 19:6-11 ("*God has wronged me...*"); 23:1-7 ("*I would present my case...*"); 30:20-21 ("*You have become cruel to me...*").
- C. Job has not done as Satan had hoped for: "*he will surely curse You to Your face!*" (2:5).
 - 1. He has maintained his devotion to God in spite of unanswered questions and unexplained circumstances - 13:15 ("*though He slay me...*"); 19:25 ("*For I know that my Redeemer lives...*").
 - 2. But he has nevertheless made untrue accusations against God; he has drawn the **wrong conclusions from his circumstances!**
 - 3. We must to view God and trust His nature according to what He has **revealed** rather than by what immediate circumstances might suggest. This is walking by faith, not by sight.

4. God's Address to Job

- A. God challenges Job in regard to His creative power - Job 38:1-7; 40:1-2.
- B. God challenges Job to humble his human enemies and exercise rule over them - 40:6-14.
- C. Job is humbled by God's revelation of Himself - Job 40:3-5; 42:1-6. **The main answer to dealing with suffering is faith in God's power and His ability to control the universe according to His sovereign purposes.** This was enough for Job, and it will be enough for a heart of faith.

5. Closing Observations

- A. Final judgment is not in this life. In this world men are free to exercise their wills as they choose.
- B. God has arranged it so that suffering strengthens our faith - Jas 1:2-4. It provides a time of reflection and evaluation and enhances dependence upon God.
- C. Pain and suffering exist to one degree or another by *man's free will*, either in consequence of Adam's sin or the natural fruit of sinful behavior or punishment of God against sinful men. **But suffering is not evidence of personal sin!**