

## The Theology of Suffering Lessons from Job

### Introduction:

The man that can stand up here and thoroughly explain suffering is a man who has clearly never suffered.

God's best attempt at explanation is the book of Job. Job's testimony has withstood the test of time because God inspired it and preserved it.

**The book of Job** tells us there is a deep suffering before which you cannot say a word. All you can do is bow your head and leave room for God to enter and fill it with Himself.

Some suffering is so devastating that one can hardly say "he does all things well."

### The preface to Job:

Poor Job did not know the preface to his own story. He suffered not knowing God & Satan had made a battleground of his soul! His suffering was **according to the will of God**. It had nothing to do with his sin, failure or life circumstances. God willed it.

**Apply:** there are times when your suffering is for no other reason than God allowed it! You are caught up in a cosmic struggle between God & Satan. There is an invisible battle going on and YOU are the battleground!

**Job=** teaches us that when the saint suffers he does not always know why- but he does somehow know down deep in his soul that all is well!

**Apply:** Job did not listen to his accusers. He knew they were wrong.

**Job=** his friends interfered with what God was doing in Job's life. **Hands off!** None dare interfere when God is working in the life of one of his saints. God is bringing these things into the life of His child for the production of bread to feed the world!

**Apply:** Do not interfere in the disciplined suffering of another saint.

**Job=** The God of the Bible is a suffering God. When the mask is removed from life and we see all its misery and shame, behind it all we see a God who cares, who is involved and who suffers with us. Our Heavenly Father's heart is broken daily by a suffering world. Job's friends mocked and accused him because they were ignorant of who God is and of his dealings with a suffering mankind.

**Apply;** In the midst of our suffering, God is the only one who does not mock us. He too was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and well acquainted with grief.

**Lesson:** All suffering is not for perfecting. We all know people whose suffering has made them mean and insufferable.

**Apply;** Suffering only perfects those who accept the call of God in Christ. Refuse it and suffering can consume you.

### Suffering is a mystery at times-

Like Job we don't know the Preface (what God is doing) we feel only God's absence, when in reality he is there in the midst of it.

**Apply:** There were three men on a cross- the bad thief, the penitent thief, and the Son of God, all three suffer the agonies of crucifixion. All suffered- yet for different reasons.

**Job**=suffered physical pain- but the Bible knows little of physical suffering, and does not make a big deal of it.

**Apply:** Our culture sees physical suffering as a curse. We demand creature comforts as proof of God's favor. Not so. The Scripture says *"for he that suffers in his flesh has ceased from sin."* In other words- physical suffering is often God's purifier.

### **New Testament light on Suffering:**

***"If any one suffers as a Christian..."* 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4:16**

**Lesson:** When the world sees a man willing to suffer as a Christian, it is first amazed, and then it is dazed, then finally disgusted!

**Illustration:** Men like pastor Youcef Nadarkhani of Iran is in prison. In October 2009 he was accused of apostasy by the Muslim government of Iran. He refuses to recant his faith in Christ. Also in 2016 Pastor Saad Abidini suffered in an Iranian prison for over two years before world-wide political pressure caused his release. All he had to do to be released was renounce faith in Christ and accept Islam. He refused.

**Apply:** To suffer as a Christian means that there is a fundamental difference between you and the rest of the world. It is more than just your Biblical worldview they differ with. The world takes exception to your loyalty to a person- Jesus Christ. That is what they find inexcusable. *"Yea though he slay me- still will I praise him"* The world's spirit of antichrist has a contempt for that loyalty, it disgusts them and they think us foolish even crazy!

**Illustration:** The world slandered Christ on the cross- *"he saved others, why can he not save himself?"*

They take our theology and twist it into contempt, satire, & sarcasm

**Apply:** To suffer as a Christian is to have no answer for the world's satire and sarcasm. The world turned on Christ at his crucifixion by turning his good words into jest & jeer. They will do the same thing to you. He gave no answer and neither can you!

***"If any one suffer according to the will of God"* 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4:19**

There is some suffering that is intentional, other that is preventable. There is also suffering that is inevitable in that it is from God.

**Apply:** Job's suffering was intentional- by God. Jesus suffering was intentional- by God. Suffering can be grand and glorious when the heart is right with God. A man is never more dangerous than when he is at peace in the center of God's will!

**Illust:** If there were no night, who could appreciate the coming of day. No night –no stars, or moon's splendor against a dark sky.

**Apply:** Your darkness is often God's *"treasures of darkness"* Isaiah 45:3

Suffering that is according to God's will is not so much about perfecting or teaching you, but rather it is God's opportunity to show others His purpose and grandeur in life thru our suffering. Through Godly suffering we become God's bread to feed the world.

**Apply:** God's will for you to suffer is rarely stated explicitly but it comes out of a life of obedience. It is impossible to live in continual obedience and not suffer for it. The men who do

not suffer in this life are not worth their salt! The finest men & women of God suffer & the devil uses their suffering to slander God.

**Apply:** Never choose to suffer! That is a sickness of dark religion like those zealots in the Philippines who have themselves nailed to a cross. Rather chose God's will even though it may mean suffering or death. Let it be *"according to God's will."*

**Lesson:** Suffering that is defined by the loss or sacrifice of things for God's sake- is utter nonsense. Paul who suffered the loss of all things=saw it as a "rubbish pile" compared to the gain he found in knowing Christ. (Phil 3)

***"The fellowship of his suffering" Philippians 3:10***

Real fellowship in the Christian sense means we share things in common with another person. We only share his sufferings when our suffering is for His sake. To suffer martyrdom, to lose your life, your friends, to lose your father or mother is only fellowship with His suffering when those losses are because of your relationship to Christ.

**Apply:** Beware of those who have sympathy for your suffering but have no sympathy for Christ himself who is behind, before and after your suffering.

When you suffer- know this- God is after one thing only in your life- he is bringing many sons to glory! And he does not care what it costs us anymore than he cared what it cost Him on the Cross. Your suffering as a child of the king is partnership with him who suffered all things for our sakes.

God has taken the responsibility for Sin, and the proof of that is the Cross. He is the suffering God, not One who reigns above in calm disdain.

**Apply;** very few of us know anything of suffering for Christ's sake. Men will suffer for conscience or convictions, or family or nations or brotherhood. Only those who are in close relationship with Christ can willingly suffer for Christ