

## Suffering that is Undeserved

### Lesson 9

### **SUFFERING AND THE GLORY OF GOD**

#### **Job 1:1—2:10**

What would you do if next week all the physical and social world that you know collapsed underneath you? What would be your reaction if in a few short days you lost your job, your business failed, your savings were destroyed, your children were killed and you contacted some horrible disease? None of you could give a complete answer until you were placed in the situation but you should definitely think about what your reaction might be.

Something very similar to this happened to Job many years ago. Job became the object of a spiritual conflict between God and Satan. Job knew nothing about this conflict but he suffered unmercifully in order to glorify God. This suffering was undeserved but not unnecessary, for he was picked out by God to prove that true believers will persevere in faith towards God even in the midst of severe suffering.

#### **JOB BLESSED BY GOD** Job :1-5

Job was a true believer who sought to keep God's commandments in everything. He was a man committed to his God, and God blessed him in everything.

Job Was a Saved Man (1:1). He was "blameless" in that he was saved and set apart to God. He was "upright" in that he walked in fellowship with God. This man "feared God" and "shunned (resisted) evil." Job was a born again believer and walking close with his God.

Job Was Blessed by God (1:2-3). God so blessed Job that he was the wealthiest and most prominent individual in the whole east.

Job Was a Family Man (1:4). He loved his children and was a good provider for their physical needs.

Job Was a Religious Man (1:5). Job offered up sacrifices for his children because he loved them and longed for God to bless them.

Job Was An Ideal Believer. There was no logical reason why he should suffer any more than anyone else. Humanly speaking, he should have suffered less because he was so true to God. However, Job was called on to glorify God in suffering.

#### **JOB AN OBJECT OF SPIRITUAL CONFLICT** 1:6-12

God Challenges Satan (1:6-8). Satan, who had been on a reconnaissance mission on the earth, was looking for men who really loved God so he could attack them. Apparently Satan could not find many who were truly faithful. Then God throws out a challenge to Satan to consider God's faithful servant Job.

***"Then the Lord said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job?'"*** (Job 1:8). Notice it is God who took the initiative and throws out the challenge to Satan, for God was confident that Job would stand true to God no matter what his external circumstances might be.

Satan Challenges God (1:9-11). Satan was convinced that Job only served God because God had blessed him with family and material possessions. If God would permit these things to be taken away, Satan felt Job would curse God.

Satan is Under God's Control (1:12). Satan was given authority by God to take any of Job's family or possessions but Satan could not touch Job's body. Satan is always somehow under God's control and operates in the permissive will of God. Satan is not stronger than God nor can Satan ever thwart God's secret will. Job knew absolutely nothing about the challenge of God to Satan and yet it really happened. There is an invisible war going on between the forces of Satan and the forces of God which we know nothing about but we are very much involved in it.

#### **JOB LOSES HIS EARTHLY POSSESSIONS** 1:13-19

Job Loses His Financial Security (1:13-17). Within a matter of minutes, Job received the bad news that he had lost all of his servants, his livestock and material possessions. This is what might be called a “financial crisis!”

Job Loses His Children (1:18-19). To add to this miserable news of economic disaster, Job was told that his seven sons and three daughters had all been killed by a devastating destructive tornado. His ten precious children were all dead. What worse could happen to him!

## **JOB WORSHIPS GOD 1:20-22**

Job Worships God in Suffering (1:20-21). When Job received this terrible news, he did not curse God, nor did he allow himself to be overcome with self-pity, nor did he withdraw from the world of reality. He was not in any way bitter but he was confused. He went to God when this suffering came upon him, for God alone could give him peace and deliver him out of this situation. He worshipped God in that he thanked God for these tragedies, knowing there was a divine purpose behind them. Job realized that God is unchangeable—only circumstances change. He also realized that God was just as righteous and just as loving towards him when he was suffering as when he was not suffering. Job knew that God was sovereign and He could do as He pleased with His servant. What a splendid attitude Job had in the face of adversity!

Job Worships God by Not Sinning (1:22). In such great suffering, Job would not curse God, nor would he stop believing in the One True God, nor would he tell God He was unfair and could not do these things to him. Job had a divine viewpoint towards suffering. Again Job knew nothing about God’s challenge to Satan or that he was suffering to glorify God. He did not understand that this suffering was the result of Satanic activity. However, he did realize that God alone was the answer to suffering and cast himself completely on God.

## **JOB LOSES HIS HEALTH 2:1-8**

A Second Challenge (2:1-3). God again challenged Satan concerning His servant Job. Job had passed the first test well and he still “maintained his integrity.” Surely you would think that Job had enough suffering but apparently God did not think so.

Job Stricken with a Disease (2:4-8). God gave Satan permission to touch Job’s health but he could not take Job’s life. He was smitten from head to foot with boils. He was so disfigured that his friends could hardly recognize him. He itched so badly that he took a piece of pottery to scrape each boil and then sat in ashes to keep the open sores from burning so badly. This man was suffering intense pain.

## **JOB LOSES HIS WIFE 2:9-10**

Job’s Wife Turns Against Him (2:9). Job lost his wife mentally and emotionally, for she turned against Job and told him to curse God and die. Mrs. Job fell apart emotionally under the pressure and stopped being his faithful supporter. To have his mate turn against him brought him much mental anguish.

Job Still Does Not Sin (2:10). Job acknowledged God’s sovereign right to do with him whatever God pleased to do, even if it meant great bodily pain. Up to this point, Job did not sin against God or say anything bad about God’s ways and purposes.

## **JOB IN CONFLICT**

Job’s Conflict with Himself. As we go through the Book of Job we find the irritating mental anguish and constant pain took its toll on Job. Job became filled with self-pity, lost control of himself and his faith collapsed temporarily. He cursed the very day of his birth. **“May the day of my birth perish, and the night it was said, ‘a boy is born!’”** (Job 3:3). **“I loathe my life”** (Job 10:1) And yet there are other places where we see his faith stays strong in his God. **“I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God.”** (Job 19:25-26). **“Though He slay me, yet I will hope in him.”** (Job 13:15). This conflict with self shows the humanness of Job as he wrestled with the problem of pain in his own life. At times he became depressed in his suffering but he always ended up acknowledging God to be the final answer to suffering.

Self-pity is the worst possible reaction to suffering. It is dishonoring to God; it is unbecoming in a rational being; and in the case of sickness, it is a positive hindrance to the patient's recovery.

Job's Conflict with His Friends. Job had three sincere but miserable comforters (Eliphaz, Bildad and Zopher), who tried to tell Job he was suffering because of some sin he committed. They were wrong because they knew nothing of God's challenge to Satan and that Job was suffering to bring glory to God. There was a fourth friend, Elihu, who believed that God had permitted this suffering to come into Job's life to strengthen his faith. Yet Elihu did not grasp that this suffering was to show that God's people will be faithful to glorify Him in all circumstances of life.

Job's Conflict with God. Job had to fight through the whole problem of pain and suffering which finally brought an attitude of humble surrender to the sovereign God of heaven and earth. God challenged Job with deep questions to show Job that he was a finite creature dealing with an infinite God. In chapter 38, God hurls some bewildering questions to Job: (1) *"Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation"?* (2) *"Have the gates of death been shown to you?"* (3) *"Do you know the laws of heaven?"* (4) *"Do you hunt the prey for the lioness?"*

There is much that Job or any person cannot understand about life, but the answer to all mysteries is found in a childlike trust in the God of heaven and earth who does all things right and well.

### **JOB'S REWARD**

God rewarded Job after his suffering with great spiritual understanding (42:1-6), with a double amount of material possessions (42:10) and a full life (42:16-17).

### **CHALLENGE TO CHRISTIANS**

Suppose you were stricken with a serious illness tomorrow. Would you be overcome with self-pity? Or would you trust God, knowing somehow that God had a purpose in this suffering and it will bring glory to God?

Let's get a little more practical. Suppose God threw out a challenge to Satan and said, "Have you considered my servant John, Joseph, Daniel or Martha?" You may put your own name in there. Then one day, for no apparent reason one or more of your children are killed in an accident. Would you curse God? Would you ball up your fist, raise it towards heaven and say, "God, you can't do this to me?" Would it ever occur to you that you might be suffering for God's glory to prove to all good angelic beings and demonic forces that you as an elect child of God and as a true believer in Christ will persevere in the midst of great tragedy because you love God more than things, family or self?

When these kinds of sufferings come, you must trust God even more. You will be able to cope with the suffering because you know of God's plan and you know the God of the plan. By faith, you realize that God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. The right attitude that you must display is that of worship or a humble spirit of surrender to a God who does all things right and well.