



LIFE GROUP SERMON NOTES

AD Series: “The Certainty of Suffering”

Ps. Paul Barker – 5/17/2015

“And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.” Acts 8:1

The Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?” Then Satan answered the Lord and said, “Does Job fear God for no reason? Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.” And the Lord said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand.” Job 1:8-12

WARM-UP (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. No right or wrong answers.

- Have you ever been in a situation where you were rejected or marginalized because of your faith? What did you do?
- Have you ever been in a country or with a group of people that spoke another language? How did you feel when you did not understand what they were saying?
- Do you watch the news regularly? How do you react when you see suffering and injustice?

WORD (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at bethelbrentwood.org/media.

There was certainly a lot of persecution in the early church. We cannot look at the book of Acts without looking at the major role that suffering and persecution had in the early church. In the next chapter, when God called Paul, he told him how much he would suffer for His Name. Suffering has always been an issue with which the church had to deal. Why does God allow his people to suffer? There have been two primary answers given to address this question.

1. Suffering is good, therefore it is not only to be accepted, but expected. People have sometimes inflicted suffering upon themselves in order to purge their own sins.
2. All suffering is bad and has to be resisted. In this view, suffering is considered as a lack of faith or the result of sin.

Both of these answers are wrong, and cause wrong approaches and wrong responses to suffering. In order to endure suffering, we need to have a biblical understanding of suffering, and there is no better place to learn about suffering than in the life of Job.

- I. **AVOID THE WRONG ANSWERS.** The answer that religious people give to suffering is that something is wrong. This was the mentality of Job's friend. When they went to comfort Job, they went with the premise: Sin produces suffering. You are suffering; therefore, you must have sinned, and we need to help you to find your sin. Job tried to defend himself, but the problem was that he had the same view of suffering himself. So, when he knew it wasn't his own sin that caused his suffering, he turned to blame God himself. Having a wrong view of suffering will cause the wrong response
- II. **EMBRACE THE RIGHT ANSWER.** God is good. Every good gift comes from the Father. The one who starts and administers pain is Satan. Man's sin has unleashed forces of darkness that cause much pain. This pain isn't necessarily because the afflicted person has sinned. God is sovereign. Nothing happens outside of God's knowledge and control. He limits the suffering. When the enemy tries to destroy a life through painful circumstances, God uses suffering to get us to love Him for who He is. Satan's accusation against Job was that Job worshipped God for his blessings, not for who he is. God used the plan, which the enemy had created to destroy Job, to actually transform him. At the end, Job loves God for who He is. This all came about through Job's suffering.
- III. **PREPARE TO LIVE WITHOUT AN ANSWER.** After multiple chapters in which Job was confused, God finally shows up, but instead of talking about the why, God talks about crocodiles and hippopotamus. God said in Job 38, "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the world?" Job never gets an answer to why he is suffering. Most of the time when we are suffering, all we want to know is why. If you knew the why, you would go through the process for the blessings and not for who God is. God did give Job back double what he had lost; but even more importantly, many generations after him are still benefiting from Job's experiences. Loving God for who he is doesn't come natural to us. CS Lewis writes:

All this is flashy rhetoric about loving you.
I never had a selfless thought since I was born.
I am mercenary and self-seeking through and through:
I want God, you, all friends, merely to serve my turn.
Peace, re-assurance, pleasure, are the goals I seek,
I cannot crawl one inch outside my proper skin:
I talk of love—a scholar's parrot may talk Greek—
But, self-imprisoned, always end where I begin.
For this I bless you as the ruin falls. The pains
You give me are more precious than all other gains.

We prepare to live without answers when we build our lives in God. When you build your life on things, suffering drives you away from your source of joy. But when you build your life on God, suffering drives you deeper into your source of joy

- IV. **TRUST THE ULTIMATE ANSWER**
Job was only relatively innocent. Only Jesus is ultimately innocent. And what did Jesus get for his innocence? Job felt like God had abandoned him, but he truly had not. Jesus was truly abandoned by the Father as he bore the sins of the world. Can you trust the ultimate answer that anything we go through is not greater than what Jesus endured? Jesus experienced the pain of sin in our place.

PERSONAL APPLICATION (10-15 minutes)

Choose an item below to discuss, or introduce another related topic for discussion.

- What has your view of suffering been? How does this teaching change your perspective on suffering?
- What does suffering look like for you where you are now? How are you responding to it?
- Have you met the One who can give strength to live without an answer? Do you want to meet Him now?

PRAYER (10-15 minutes)

Pray for any of the following, as well as any other requests you may have.

- Pray that we will know and love God for who he is.
- Pray that your soul can rest in the knowledge of God's sovereignty and goodness.
- Thank the Lord for his love, faithfulness and goodness, even in the middle of our suffering.