

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

MOTIVATIONAL LESSONS “The Suffering of Job”

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

One of the most encouraging books in all the Bible is the Book of Job. Job was a man who suffered greatly at the hand of Satan, yet in all of this suffering Job held fast to both his faith and his integrity. In the end, Job was blessed by God because of his faithfulness. We live in a world where, sometimes, bad things do happen. But as we think about Job, we learn that he did not suffer because of any sin of his own. The Bible tells us in Job 1: 1, “There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil.” Job is presented to us as a righteous man. He was not suffering because he had sinned or because he was an infidel. Rather, Job was one who had followed God all the days of his life. As a result, he suffered at the hand of Satan? Why do people sometimes suffer today? Why do bad things sometimes happen to good people? Why is it that when we are trying to live a good life, Satan causes bad things to come into our lives? For example, why does a mother miscarry an unborn child—something that seems bad and evil? Why does a spouse or loved one who is close to us die unexpectedly? Think about tornadoes or hurricanes. Why do such things happen and cause good people to suffer? Why do people use guns or knives to commit atrocities against other people? Why do some people commit crimes such as murder or rape? Why do these bad things happen to good people? The Book of Job offers us some insight into such matters as we consider the suffering of Job and why God allowed Job to suffer.

We begin in Job 1 by looking at Satan’s plan, and how that plan actually becomes God’s proof to Satan that men will serve Him merely because it is the right thing to do. In Job 1: 6-12, we read,

“Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. And the Lord said to Satan, ‘From where do you come?’ So Satan answered the Lord and said, ‘From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.’ Then 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, one who fears God and shuns evil?’ So Satan answered the Lord and said, ‘Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!’ And the Lord said to Satan, ‘Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person.’ So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.

As we are introduced to this heavenly scene, we see Satan (vss. 6-7) presenting himself before God. He has been going to and fro, back and forth, on the Earth. God interprets this as Satan looking for someone to cause to be lost. God then offers Satan a suggestion. He asks, “Have you considered my servant, Job?” Satan then asked God a question when he said, “Does Job fear God for nothing?” Satan then told God that the only reason that Job

served Him was because God had protected him and blessed the work of his hands. As a result of Satan's accusation, God gives him permission to cause Job to suffer. Here, then, we are introduced to the first round of events that is about to take place. But there is a key question that comes out of this session. Job 1:9 is really the key to the entire Book of Job. Satan answered the Lord and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing?" I believe that this is what the Book of Job is all about. The Book of Job teaches us that we **can** serve God **simply because He is God!** Do we serve God because of Who He is? Or do we serve God because of what we get out of it? Do we serve God because we have been promised "all spiritual blessings" (Eph. 1:3)? Are we waiting for those blessings, and thus that is the only reason that we are Christians? If all of that was taken away, and if God was God and we were His servants, would we still serve Him just because of His nature? That is the question that Satan asked God. God puts up Job as the answer to the question. The suffering that occurred in Job's life is the direct result of Satan's efforts to show God that men serve Him only because He protects and blesses them.

In Job 1:13-19, we see the first test that is given to Job. The first round of tests begins in this chapter. Job 1:13-19 records:

"Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house; and a messenger came to Job and said, 'The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, when the Sabeans raided them and took them away—indeed they have killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!' While he was still speaking, another also came and said, 'The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them; and I alone have escaped to tell you!' While he was still speaking, another also came and said, 'The Chaldeans formed three bands, raided the camels and took them away, yes, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!' While he was still speaking, another also came and said, 'Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, and suddenly a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people, and they are dead; and I alone have escaped to tell you!'"

Imagine this successive group of calamities that occurs in Job's life. His sheep are taken. His camels are taken. Fire from Heaven rains down and burns up his servants and his cattle. Then, in addition to all of that, a wind come across the desert and hits the house where Job's children are. As a result, the house falls and kills Job's children. In one fell swoop, Job loses everything. He is bankrupt, and has nothing to call his own. And not only is he bankrupt, but he also has lost what is most important to him—his own children. Truly, Satan caused Job great suffering in this first test. The question is this: How did Job respond? If Satan's accusation was true, and if Job served God only for what he could get out of it, then Job should have "thrown in the towel" here. But notice what Job said in Job 1:20-22,

"Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said: 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong."

Imagine what Job has just suffered. He has just had what we might call a "black Monday." He lost **everything**--including his children. Yet the Bible tells us "then Job fell to the ground and worshiped." He then said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." This first test is proof that Job was serving God because He was God, and that men do not necessarily serve God because of the blessings He gives them, but instead because they want to follow His teachings.

Then a second test occurs in Job's life. He is struck with an awful disease. Job 2:1-10 says, “

“Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord. And the Lord said to Satan, ‘From where do you come?’ So Satan answered the Lord and said, ‘From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.’ Then 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, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause.’ So Satan answered the Lord and said, ‘Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!’ And the Lord said to Satan, ‘Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life.’ So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And he took for himself a potsherd with which to scrape himself while he sat in the midst of the ashes. Then his wife said to him, ‘Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!’ But he said to her, ‘You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?’ In all this Job did not sin with his lips.”

Here we see the second test that occurs in Job's life. He is now given some awful disease. Throughout the Book of Job, we are given some of the details about this disease. In Job 2:7 we are told that Job had painful boils and burning sores from head to toe. In Job 7:5, Job describes his calamity has one that gave him rotten, cracked, pus-infected skin all over his body. In Job 18:13, Job describes his disease as rottenness of bone. In Job 30:17-19, Job described his condition as one of great anguish and pain. In Job 30:30, he describes his disease as one that produced skin rot and fever. Job's disease was so bad that the only way he could find comfort was by sitting in an ash pile and taking a piece of broken pottery to scrape the dead flesh off his skin. So as we think about Job, we can see that he suffered greatly with a physical disease.

But Satan also gets to Job through his wife. She looks at Job's disease and sees the pitiful shape in which Job finds himself. Then she says, “Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!” Job says to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?” We learn that in all of this, “Job did not sin.” He remained true to God. No, he did not understand everything that was happening to him. And yes, he is going to have some questions (as is evident from chapters 3 through 30). But as we look at Job's life, we can see that although he suffered greatly, he still remained true to God.

So why did Job suffer? Why did all of these bad things occur in Job's life? Job is never told **why** he suffered. Instead, he is told **in Whom** he should trust. You can read the Book of Job from beginning to end, and you will see that God never tells Job exactly why he was suffering. We know that his suffering was the result of Satan's actions. And we know that Job's suffering proved that men can, and will, serve God just because He is God. But Job is never told all of this. Instead, he was told in Whom he should trust at such times. That same principle is true for us today. We may not always understand why bad things happen in life that cause us great pain, or why certain atrocities occur. But we can know in Whom we should trust during such times. The “who” is so much more important than the “why.” If we understand the nature of God, and we know that must put our faith in Him, then we can know that regardless of why bad things happen to us, God is still in control and will work things out for our good. Romans 8:28 says, “We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.” We know that things will work out. We may not “be able to see the forest for the trees,” but we **can** know that God **is** in control. And if we understand that, then we simply

need to trust in the Lord. The Bible says, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” (Prov. 3:5-6). This is what Job did. In Job 13:15, we find one of the most encouraging statements in the Book of Job. Job said, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. Even so, I will defend my own ways before Him.” Job said, “Even if I die, even if God kills me, I still will trust in God.” That is the attitude we need today. That is what real faith is all about—trusting in God even when do not understand why. Why does a mother lose an unborn baby? We may never know all of the reasons for that. Why do tornadoes and hurricanes occur in this world and cause terrible problems? Why do people put bombs into trucks and use them to blow up buildings? We may not know why. But we **can** know in Whom we are to trust in times like those. If we will trust in God, even when we do not understand why certain things happen, then we can know that we will be taken care of. This is what Job had to learn.

But throughout the Book of Job, we do see some reasons as to why suffering occurs. Why do Christians suffer today? Why did Job suffer? We know for sure that Satan and sin cause suffering. Why do people suffer? Satan and sin cause suffering in the world in which we live today. Satan was the active force behind Job losing his wealth, his family, and all that he had. It was at the hand of Satan that these things occurred. Today, we also suffer because of Satan and the effects of sin. Listen to Job 2:7—“So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.” Who caused Job such physical pain? Was it God? Was it his friends? No. Satan was the reason that Job was suffering. We need to realize that Satan is an active adversary for us today. Satan wants to cause us to lose our immortal souls. He will use any means possible to cause us to curse God, to give up on Christianity, and to leave The Faith. In fact, that is what 1 Peter 5:8 teaches us. We cannot help but think of 1 Peter 5:8 was we think of the words of Job. Satan was going to and fro, back and forth, on the Earth. Then, 1 Peter 5:8 says, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” Satan is actively trying to cause people to be lost. He may use physical illness against us. He may use friends against us. He may use calamity in ways that we cannot even imagine. But Satan is going to do whatever he can to cause us to be lost. Knowing that helps us to do two things. First, it helps us to understand how Satan works. And second, it helps us not to blame God for the problems that occur. When bad things happen, we do not need to blame God. We ought to get angry at the devil or at sin because at that point, Satan is trying to get us to deny The Faith.

Why do Christians suffer today? Sometimes it is because they are righteous. If you read the Book of Acts, why was it that people bounced rocked off of Paul’s head? Why did they stone him and leave him outside the city to die? Why did they persecute him? It was because he was a righteous man who was preaching the Gospel. He told people what God said, and sometimes they did not like it. The same principle is true for us today. Sometimes we suffer “for righteousness’ sake.” Is that not what Jesus said in Matthew 5:10-12? Listen to His words in the beatitudes:

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Sometimes we are going to suffer because ungodly people do not like righteous people being around them. They would rather have friends around them who are ungodly like they are. But regardless of what it costs us, we must continue to righteous. In Acts 14:22, we are told of Paul suffering at the hands of ungodly people. He was a righteous man, but the

people to whom he spoke did not accept his words. Rather, they were inflamed by them—which caused them to take Paul outside the city, stone him, and leave him for dead. In Acts 14:22, Paul said, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.” Yes, there will be trials and tribulations. But we can go to Heaven even if those trials cost us our lives. Paul promised that we **would** have to suffer as Christians. In 2 Timothy 3:12, he wrote, “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will [not “might,” not “may,” but **will**] suffer persecution. We are going to suffer as Christians. It may be that people poke fun at our lifestyle. It may be that for Christians in foreign countries, people will literally bounce rocks off their heads. But we need to be sure that being righteous is more important than avoiding suffering. So, yes, Christians **do** suffer for righteousness’ sake.

Christians also may suffer today as a means of purification. Our suffering may help us to refine things in our lives that are lacking. Suffering may point out areas in which we need improvement. James taught us a very important principle about suffering when he said, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing” (Jas. 1:2-4). This is the opposite of the way the world thinks. “Count it a joy when you fall into various trials?!” Why? It is because those trials can help us test our faith. They can help us have patience and endurance, just like Job gained during his suffering. Job gained endurance through his trials. Maybe he saw some areas in his life in which he needed to improve. Job no doubt was blessed, in the end, as a result of his endurance, his faithfulness, and his integrity. There are a couple of passages in the Book of Psalms which teach us that suffering can have a positive effect in our lives. Think about Psalm 119:67. The psalmist said this: “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word.” Here is an example of a person who, before trouble, trial, and affliction occurred, went astray. But because of his affliction, he now keeps God’s Word. In Psalm 119:71, the psalmist went on to say, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes.” Here, the psalmist finally was able to see the good that came from his sufferings—which helped him learn and keep the Word of God. Today, we have the principle set before us that sometimes suffering is good for us and helps us to see our weaknesses. Suffering can help us see our weaknesses. It helps us have more faith and trust in God. And it gives us patience—something that we need in order to survive in this life.

Suffering is a help to us today because it creates endurance. James commented on Job in the Book of James. In James 5:11, James said, “Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.” How did Job’s suffering help him? Job gained endurance through his suffering. He is described by James as a patient and persevering man. Today, we can gain endurance through our trials, too. Have you ever wondered how long-distance runners gain their endurance? They do not start running 26 miles all of a sudden. They work up to it. They start out with all they can do at one time ...2 miles, 3 miles, or whatever it may be. Then they build up to 5 miles. Then they build up to 10 miles. Eventually, they are able to run a complete marathon. The same is true of the Christian walk. We build upon the trials we experience so that we can gain endurance. When we face certain trials, they prepare us for things that we may have to face in the future. When we face sickness, and we are caused to ask some really difficult questions, answering those questions by using God’s Word can help us prepare for some things that we may have to face in the future. So, suffering causes endurance.

Suffering also causes us to look forward to Heaven. One of the things that we see in the Book of Job is that Job longed for a Redeemer. He longed for someone to hear his case. He wanted to present his case before God. And when he finally was able to take his case

before God, he realized that he had not understood all that he needed to understand. He realized that the suffering he endured would eventually be worth it because of Heaven. Today, our suffering can cause us to look forward to Heaven. I often think of Romans 8: 18, because it reminds me of this principle. Heaven **is** going to be worth it all. Paul wrote, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Regardless of how much we suffer, or what we have to endure in this life, if we remain faithful, we can know that Heaven **will** be worth it all. What if we **do** have to suffer in this life? That is not what is important. What is important is this: **Did we remain faithful to God?** Are we holding fast to our integrity? Did we stay true to God and His Word in the midst of our suffering? As we look at the Book of Job, we learn that in spite of trials, and in spite of all that Satan may do to cause us to be lost, we must hold fast to our faith in God. We must not give up on Him, and we must not blame God. Rather, we must understand that God is in control and that if we remain true to Him and His Word, He will see us through to the end. Job learned this, because Job 42 tells us that Job was blessed more at the end of the book than he had been at the beginning. Job repented, and admitted that he had said some things that he should not have said because he did not understand certain things. He asked God to forgive him, and no doubt God did.

Today, I want to encourage you, if your life is filled with suffering, to put your trust in God. Maybe you are suffering because of sin in your life. If you have a life filled with sin, you will never find true peace and happiness of any kind until you accept Jesus as your Savior. How does one accept Jesus as his Savior? How do we obey the Gospel today? To put suffering behind us in such a way that we can rejoice even when it occurs, we must first hear the Word of God. Then, we must believe that Jesus is God's Son. Once we have believed in Jesus as the Son of God, we must confess that He is our Lord and Savior. Then we must repent of those things in our lives that are not right. We have to turn **from** sin and turn **to** God. Then we must obey God in baptism for the forgiveness of our sins. In Acts 2:37, when the people cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?," Peter said, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). The Bible tells us in Acts 2:47 that "the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." Are you a child of God? Are you suffering because of sin? You do not have to suffer because sin any longer. Jesus can help you with the sin problem.

If you would like to have a copy of today's lesson on DVD, we would be happy to make that available to you. If you will come to our Website, www.thegospelofchrist.com, and fill out a request form, we will send you a free DVD of this lesson or any other lesson that we have listed. It is our prayer today that as you go through life, the "why" of suffering is not as important as the "who." May be always trust in God and give Him the glory.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST is brought to you by loving, caring members of the church of Christ. The McLish Avenue church of Christ in Ardmore, Oklahoma, oversees this evangelistic effort. For a free CD or DVD of today's broadcast, please write to:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST
607 McLish Ave.
Ardmore, OK 73401

You may call **580-223-3289**. Please visit us on the web at www.thegospelofchrist.com. We encourage you to attend the church of Christ, where "the Bible is loved and the Gospel is preached."

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “THE SUFFERING OF JOB”

1. What is one of the best books in the Bible to read in order to understand suffering?
2. In Job 1:1, how does the Bible God describe the man by the name of Job?
3. What, according to Job 1:6-12, did Satan suggest was the only reason for Job’s faithfulness to God?
4. How did God prove to Satan that his accusation was unfounded and false?
5. According to Job 1:13-19, what happened to Job, to his flocks, to his servants, and to his family?
6. What statements did Job make in Job 1:20-22 which showed that although he was suffering, he nevertheless was determined to remain faithful to God?
7. When Job did not “buckle” under the weight of the losses that he had suffered in Job 1:13-19, what, according to Job 2:1-10, did Satan ask to be able to do to Job in order to “step up the pace” of Job’s suffering?
8. What did Job’s wife suggest that Job needed to do in the face of all the suffering and calamity that she and her husband were enduring?
9. What response did Job make to his wife’s suggestion?
10. According to Job 13:15, what was Job’s attitude toward the suffering that he was having to endure?
11. In this lesson, the following statements are made: “We may not always understand why bad things happen in life that cause us great pain, or why certain atrocities occur. But we can know in Whom we should trust during such times.” Explain the full meaning of those comments.
12. What did God promise His people in Romans 8:28?
13. What does Proverbs 3:5-6 admonish us to do?
14. Explain Paul’s statement in Acts 14:22 (“We must, through many tribulations, enter the kingdom of God”).
15. What did James mean when he said in James 5:11, “Indeed we count them blessed who endure”?
16. What did James urge Christians to do in regard to suffering (James 1:2-4)?
17. Explain the meaning of Psalm 119:67 and Psalm 119:71, being sure to discuss the connection between the teaching found within the two verses.