

This morning we move from the suffering of Jesus – easy to understand, and the suffering of Joseph – hard to understand until the end, to the suffering of Job – impossible to understand.

However sound our theology, however snug we are with our philosophical understanding of the problem of evil and suffering, there will likely come a time when each of our lives are touched by an evil so horrific and a suffering so inequitable and irrational that we will be shaken to the very core of our being and explanations and answers will be inadequate.

When I was 6 years old living in Longview, Texas on 1204 Centenary Drive, my dad was a coach at Forest Park Jr. High, and our best friends were the Cooks who lived only a few blocks away. Coach Cook worked with my dad, they started their careers together and stayed close and are still close to this day. Mike Cook was their older son, my best friend and playmate. Mark, 4, was their younger son. One day Mark was playing outside, climbed into their station wagon parked on an incline in the driveway, somehow kicked it out of gear. When it started moving, he panicked and jumped out, falling under the front tire as it rolled backward, and was instantly crushed to death.

How do you deal with suffering like that? What category do you put that in to make sense of it? What do you say to your best friends? There are no easy answers, are there?

The general rule throughout Scripture is that obedience brings blessing, disobedience brings cursing; God blesses the righteous and curses the wicked; He exalts the humble and abases the proud; the righteous prosper and the wicked suffer. That's the norm; that's the rule. But there are exceptions to the rule. Reality is never that tidy or simplistic. Though we don't know what category to put it in, there is such a thing as innocent suffering or righteous suffering where the evil and loss and pain experienced is grossly disproportionate to the relative inoffensiveness of the afflicted party. The rule that governs the moral universe is broken and we naturally cry, "Unfair! Unfair!"

That's why God has given us the book of Job.

The book of Job is the main book in the Bible dealing with suffering, and it addresses what I think is the hardest kind of suffering – (a) the unjust suffering (b) of the righteous (c) that never gets an explanation. Inequitable, innocent, inexplicable.

So we'll look at it today as the final installment in our series, and the most appropriate way to end it, because most often in our suffering what we're left with is answers that are insufficient and a God who isn't. *Insufficient* answers but an *all-sufficient* God.

Now the book of Job divides into three parts: the beginning, the middle, and the end, and I see no reason to depart from that structure.

The beginning - chs.1-2 - introduce Job, his suffering, and his initial response to it.

The middle - chs.3-37 - contain the dialogue between Job and his friends as they try to sort out why these terrible things happened.

The end - chs.38-42 – climax with God revealing Himself to Job and Job repenting and being vindicated and restored.

To help us learn the appropriate lessons from each of those three sections, I've called them: responding, wrestling, receiving. So we're talking today about disproportionate suffering of the righteous that goes unexplained: responding to it, wrestling with it, receiving from it. (Notice I didn't say recovering from it. I don't think we do recover from it, or that we should. Hopefully we're changed by it, but that means receiving from it.)

1. Responding to it (1-2).

Here's what happened. Vs.1 – Job was a blameless, upright man who feared God and turned away from evil. He had 7 sons and 3 daughters and great wealth: 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and many servants – “the greatest of all the men of the east.”

And equal to his greatness was his godliness. Vs.5 says he regularly offered burnt offerings on behalf of each of his children *just in case* they had sinned or cursed God in their hearts.

So right away we know that if suffering is intended as a punishment for evil, Job is disqualified. He's not a candidate for retribution or chastening. He's a good and godly man who pursues righteousness and avoids evil and reveres God in all he does.

Then one day all hell broke loose. While his children were eating and drinking in the oldest brother's house:

Vs.14 - First the Sabians attacked and stole all his oxen and donkeys and killed all the servants who attend them.

Vs.16 - Then the fire of God fell and destroyed all his sheep and the servants with them.

Vs.17 - Then the Chaldeans raided the camel herd and took them all and killed the servants.

Vs.18 – Then a great wind demolished his son's home and all of his children were crushed and killed.

One catastrophe after another, all in one day! What happened? Did Job do something wrong? Did his children? His servants? No, here's what happened: Satan made an accusation.

Apparently Satan didn't believe that human beings would worship God just for who He is. He thinks we worship God because He's made our lives so wonderful. The devil thinks we worship God because of all the good He does for us and all the stuff He gives to us. Why else would we?

So when God said, *“Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.”* Satan said in **vs.9**, *“Does Job fear God for nothing?”* Look at all You've done for him. **Vs.10** – *You've made a hedge about him on every side. You've blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.* (No wonder He worships you – you made him rich!) *But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has – take away his stuff, and he will surely curse You to Your face!”*

Is that true? God knows it isn't, but Satan doesn't, and maybe Job doesn't. So God agrees to the wager. **Vs.12** – *“alright, all that he has is in your hand, only do not touch him.”*

After Satan was done wreaking havoc and all the messengers had come and gone, **vs.20** says, *“Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped, saying, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” And through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.*

God was right. But Satan wasn’t convinced.

So again, ch.2, the sons of God (demons) appeared before the Lord to give an account of themselves, Satan among them, and God said to him (vs.3), *“Have you considered my servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to ruin him without cause.”*

And Satan answered, *“Sure, but he has perfect health. Who’s not “happy in Jesus” when they have perfect health? Take that away and I guarantee you he’ll curse You to Your face.*

So in **vs.6** the Lord said to Satan, *“Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life.”*

And on top of all his other misery, Job was stricken with some kind of skin disease like boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And it was so inflamed and irritated and itchy he would scrape himself with the sharp pieces of broken pottery as he sat among the ashes.

At that point his wife broke; she couldn’t take anymore – **vs.9** – *“Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!”* But he said to her, *“Now honey, be sensible, you know we can’t go there; Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity? And in all this Job did not sin with his lips.”*

His suffering was so bad that when his friends came to comfort him, vs.12 says *they didn’t even recognize him!* And they tore their robes and threw dust on their heads and sat in the ashes with him for a week not saying a word, just weeping with those who weep.

Now what can we take from that just as lessons on how we should respond initially to suffering?

a. *When things go wrong, let’s get three things right: our worship, our words, our weeping.*

Our worship – God is the same before, during, and after our suffering. If we worshiped Him before, we should worship Him during and after. He’s either *always* worthy or never. Whether He gives or takes away, His name is to be praised.

Our words – don’t let pain cause you to sin with your lips. We only show how superficial and shallow our faith is if we gladly accept good from God but then murmur about adversity. Keep affirming what you know is true. Cursing God will not remove the pain or restore what you’ve lost.

Our weeping – let it flow. Mourn. Grieve. Cry. Let others cry with you. Don’t hold it in. You’re in pain. What you’ve gone through hurts. It’s okay to say it and show it and share it.

b. *Just admit from the outset that you don’t understand this.* You don’t know what’s going on. Job didn’t know what was going on. Recognize that in some cases, to know what’s going on *in the world* we would have to know what’s going on *in heaven*, and apart from divine

revelation we can't. So we're left in the dark much of the time. Some things God has revealed to us, some things He hasn't; the things revealed belong to us, the secret things belong to Him. Your suffering could be one of those cases. Things are going on that you can't possibly know. So say that to yourself, "God I trust that things are going on here that I can't possibly know, so I'm going to withhold my judgment on this, since I don't have all the facts."

There's plenty that we *do* know. We do know that there's a spiritual battle taking place in the heavenlies. We do know that God's people are often the target of that battle. We do know that there are certain aspects of His glory that God is pleased to make known to rulers and authorities in the heavenly places (Satan and his demons) *through us, through the church* (Eph.3:10). So we can assume that at least in some cases, our suffering is related to that.

I mean picture Satan in heaven surrounded by 10 million angels awaiting Job's response. Then Job answers, and, unknown to him, 20 million arms are raised and 10 million mighty voices shout, "Worthy is the Lord God of Job!" And what does Satan do? He flees from the presence of the praise of God. What if that's why you suffer.

But you don't know. So just admit that right up front: surely there are things going on here in my suffering that I can't see and don't understand.

c. *Don't do what so many Christians do and question or deny the sovereignty of God over your suffering.* Job affirms it. **1:21** – *"The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away."* **2:10** – *"Shall we accept good from God and not accept adversity [from God]?"* And after each of those statements, notice that it says, *"In all this Job did not sin with his lips."* He wasn't sinning to say that both comforts and calamities come from the hand of God. Rock solid confidence in the sovereignty of God Job would not relinquish, and neither should we.

In fact, let's face it, the one obvious theological point of **ch.1-2** is that *God grants to Satan limited power to cause pain and suffering and destruction and death.* It won't do any good to deny that. Job would not resort to easy comfort about this not really being the will of God – it must be the work of Satan. Of course, it was the work of Satan; but in God's universe, even Satan's work cannot step outside the boundaries of God's sovereignty. And while that is what raises the problem, it is also what promises hope. So don't abandon the ship; don't jump out of the frying pan into the fire.

That leads to the second part of the book.

First, *responding to* disproportionate suffering of the righteous that goes unexplained, second:

2. Wrestling with it (3-37).

The wrestling match begins in ch.3 with Job wishing he'd never been born. **Vs.3** – *"Let the day perish on which I was to be born."* **Vs.11** – *"Why did I not die at birth, come forth from the womb and expire?"* **Vs.20** – *"Why is light [ever] given to him who suffers, and life to the bitter of soul?"*

The excruciating loss and the relentless pain had taken their toll and Job gave vent to his misery, "If my life was going to be filled with this much sorrow and suffering, why was I ever born?"

That outburst opens the door for the others to speak.

And what follows in the next 34 chapters is three cycles of dialogue between Job and his friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, climaxed by a monologue from Elihu.

The first three guys all said basically the same thing: *Job you're suffering because you're sinning.*

In **4:7** Eliphaz says, *"Who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright destroyed?" According to what I have seen, those who plow iniquity and those who sow trouble harvest it."*

And we want to say, where have you been living; not on *this* planet. His theology is too simple. He doesn't have a category for what Job is going through.

Then he says in **4:17** *"Can mankind be just before God? Can a man be pure before His maker? In other words, we're all sinners, Job, that's why we suffer. All suffering is punishment for sin.*

Then in **5:17** he expands that to include the possibility of suffering as chastening, *"Behold, how happy is the man whom God reproves, so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty."*

He sees all suffering in two categories. Punishment that evildoers deserve or discipline that God's children need. But that's it.

Job responds in ch.6 by defending his innocence. **6:10** – *"I have not denied the words of the Holy One. 6:24* – *"Teach me, and I will be silent; show me how I have erred."* He cannot see how Eliphaz' simple principle of retributive justice applies in his case. And he's right, God Himself has already born witness to Job's upright, blameless character.

Then Bildad joins in with even more boldness and less compassion. In **8:3** he asks, *"Does God pervert justice? Or does the Almighty pervert what is right? If your sons sinned against Him, then He delivered them into the power of their transgression."* God is just, Job, so someone has sinned here, if not you, then your children must be guilty of some unknown sin, that's why they were crushed in their house. Then he pours salt on the wound in **vs.5**, *"If you would seek God and implore the compassion of the Almighty, if you are pure and upright, surely now He would rouse Himself for you and restore your righteous estate."*

Same theology. Same superficial application of God's justice. But Job doesn't surrender. Notice what he says in **9:22** – *"It is all one; therefore I say, "He destroys the guiltless and the wicked. If the scourge kills suddenly, He mocks the despair of the innocent. The earth is given into the hand of the wicked; He covers the faces of its judges. If it is not He, then who is it?"*

Job holds to his confidence in God's sovereignty, but he knows it's too simple to say that things always go better on this earth if you're righteous. Sometimes the wicked and the innocent share the same fate, or worse, the wicked rule and govern and prosper while the righteous suffer. And if it is not God who does this, then who?

So Zophar takes the podium. And he repeats the party line more harshly yet. In **11:4** he rebukes Job for claiming to be innocent and then in **vs.13** tells him to put away his sin so that God might restore him, *"If you would direct your heart right, and spread out your hand to Him; if iniquity is in your hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in your tents.*

Then indeed, you could lift up your face without defect, and you would be steadfast and not fear.” Job you have to deal with the sin in your life!

Finally Job responds with the sarcasm their insensitivity deserves:

12:3 – *“I have intelligence as well as you; I am not inferior to you. Besides who does not know such [simple] things as these?”*

13:12 – *“Your memorable sayings are proverbs of ashes, your defenses are defenses of clay.”*

13:4 – *“You are all worthless physicians!”*

That’s just the first round. That continues for two more cycles, with no new arguments, only growing hostility and impatience on all sides. They continue to accuse Job of some hidden sin in his life; Job continues to affirm his innocence.

Ultimately Job requests an appeal. He doesn’t believe he’s getting a fair trial with these three, so in 13:3 he says, *“I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to argue my case with God.”* He knows that God knows the truth about his character and with God He would receive justice.

So Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar finally give up and shut up. The silence is taken as the cue for the younger man, **Elihu**, who, out of respect for his elders, has waited patiently biting his tongue, to take his turn in **ch.32**. [**read 32:1-5**]

And his words were equally insensitive but slightly more accurate. They had all said suffering is punishment; he suggested that suffering is preventive – not *for* sin, but to keep you *from* sin. They had all said that suffering is God chastening the sinner; he suggested that suffering is God refining the righteous.

Here’s a taste of his wisdom.

In **33:14** he describes two ways God speaks to man: through His Word and through pain. **Vs.14** – *“Indeed God speaks once, or twice, yet no one notices it. In a dream, a vision of the night, when sound sleep falls on men, while they slumber in their beds, [this was before men had the Scriptures, so God revealed Himself through dreams and visions, like he did to Joseph]* **Vs.16** – *Then He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction, that He may turn man aside from his conduct, and keep man back from pride; He keeps back his soul from the pit, and his life from passing over into Sheol.”* And then **vs.19** – *“man is also chastened with pain on his bed, and with unceasing complaint in his bones.”*

He’s saying, God speaks through revelation and through suffering, but in each case His purpose is the same: to open our ears, to seal our instruction, to change our conduct, to keep us from pride, to turn us from sin, to deliver us from death. In other words, not to punish but to save. Elihu presents God not as an angry judge punishing sin but as a Deliverer saving from sin. The pain God causes is like the surgeon’s scalpel, not the executioner’s sword.

And that’s right. Even the righteous, like Job, have residual sin and pride in their hearts, and God uses the sieve of suffering to strain it out.

So suffering is not dispensed willy-nilly or arbitrarily. It is apportioned to us as individually designed, tailor-fit, custom-made, expert therapy by the loving hand of our great Physician. And its aim is that our faith might be refined, our holiness might be enlarged, our pride might be squashed, and our soul might be saved.

So what Elihu says is accurate; his words are true; his insights are good; much better than the other three. But here's the catch: it's still not necessarily the reason why all this has happened! He presents a better case for why the righteous suffer in general, but he still hasn't answered why in this particular case Job has suffered, and he can't answer that because he doesn't know. None of them know.

So what should we do with all this dialogue? What lessons can we learn for wrestling with suffering – our own and others'? Two words, one to the comforters and one to the afflicted.

a. *When people are suffering they don't need you to be profound, just present; that's enough.* Just be a listener; be a sounding board and let them hear what it is they're actually saying and usually they'll end up in the right place anyway. Now is not the time to correct their theology or hit them with glib clichés: "Well you know, we're all sinners, so we all deserve more suffering than we get." Resist the urge to break the uncomfortable silence by saying something unwise. Just empathize, "Believe me, I don't understand this either and I'm so sorry it's happened. What can I do?" All four of these guys were great friends and wonderful counselors as long as they remained silent.

b. *If you're the afflicted, don't be afraid to wrestle.*

Wrestle with your emotions; wrestle with your theology; wrestle with God! Jacob did. The psalm-writers did. It's okay. Slug it out with God. God's not afraid of you. God's not afraid that you might find out the truth! God has no Achilles heel. Ask Him the hard questions.

Ps.10:1 – *"Why do You stand afar off, O Lord? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?"*

Ps.13:1 – *"How long, O Lord, will you forget me forever?"*

Ps.22:1 – *"My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? I cry by day, but You don't answer; and by night, but I have no rest."*

Ps.89:46 – *"How long, O Lord? Will you hide yourself forever? Will your wrath burn like fire? Remember what my span of life is; for what vanity you have created all the sons of men! What man can live and not see death? Where are your former lovingkindnesses, O Lord, which you swore to David in your faithfulness?"*

Ps.94:3 – *"How long shall the wicked, O Lord, how long shall the wicked exult?"*

Or **Habakkuk**: *God, why don't you do something? Can't you see what's going on down here? "I am doing something, I'm raising up the Chaldeans." What!? How can you use a wicked nation like that to judge a wicked nation like this?"*

It's okay to voice your complaint.

D.A. Carson addresses this point when he writes,

"God does not blame us if in our suffering we frankly vent our despair and confess our loss of hope, our sense of futility, our lamentations about life itself. [Remember that God will later excoriate the miserable comforters, but insist that Job himself said right things]. Of course, it is possible in grief and misery to say the wrong things, to say blasphemous things. Job's wife is not praised for her counsel: "Curse God and die!" But within certain boundaries ... it is far better to be frank about our grief, candid in our despair, honest with our questions, than to suppress them and wear a public front of puffy piety. God knows our thoughts in any case. Whatever "resolution" the book of Job provides turns on Job's questions and God's responses. Without the questions, there would have been no responses.

(How Long? 141)

So wrestle, ask the hard questions. But if you're going to ask the hard questions, don't run off; stick around long enough to hear the hard answers.

Don't be in such a hurry for the suffering to end or the answers to come that you waste the opportunity to think deeply about the hard realities of life and learn to wait on the Lord.

Suffering has forced you to stop your normal routine for a reason – maybe your normal routine *is* the reason – but in any case, if you dare, like Jacob, to *wrestle* with God, dare to *wait* for Him to bless you.

That takes us to the climax of the book and the most important stage of suffering – from responding to it and wrestling with it to:

3. Receiving from it (38-42).

Whenever we face suffering, especially disproportionate suffering of the righteous that goes unexplained, human wisdom eventually fails. And when it does we have two choices: we can either despair or *receive* what only God can give us, which is not likely to be anything close to what we expect.

This last part of Job is the Bible's version of the *The Shack*. (A popular allegory about suffering, written by William Young). Many of you have read *The Shack*. I have too. And while I certainly didn't like everything in the book, there are two things that I do appreciate about it.

One is that it captures the degree to which God is willing to condescend to meet with us and make Himself known to us and minister to us. That's what the incarnation was all about. God became man so that we could know Him and know that He loves us and cares for us and is not indifferent to our suffering, but intimately involved in it.

The other thing I like about the book is that it makes clear that if you were to get your wish and actually have the face to face, heart to heart talk with God that you think you deserve, *it wouldn't go like you think it would go*.

I just think there are a lot of people in our world today who are bitter, resentful, and angry with God, shaking their fist at Him, and saying, "If I could just have an audience with God in person, I'd give Him a piece of my mind, I'd have a few choice words for Him." But if that encounter actually occurred they would be surprised at the outcome.

How do I know that? I've read Job 38-41.

Throughout his wrestling, Job has been requesting an audience with God. Well he finally gets it. In **ch.38** God speaks *out of the whirlwind*. And if God speaks out of the whirlwind, guess what Job gets? Blown away.

38:2 – "*Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? [You want to set Me straight – fine] Now gird up your loins like a man, and I will ask you, and you instruct Me!*"

4 – "*Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth! Tell me, if you have understanding, who set its measurements, since you know?*"

8 – "*Who enclosed the sea with doors? When I said, v.11 - "Thus far you shall come, but no farther; and here shall your proud waves stop?"*

12 – "*Have you ever in your life commanded the morning, and caused the dawn to know its place?*"

- 19 – *Where is the way to the dwelling of light? And darkness, where is its place?*
 21 – *“You know, for you were born then.*
 22 – *Have you entered the storehouses of the snow?*
 25 – *“Who has cleft a channel for the flood, or a way for the thunderbolt; to bring rain on a land without people, on a desert without a man in it, to satisfy the waste and desolate land, and to make the seeds of grass to sprout? Has the rain a father? [Is it you?] Or who has begotten the drops of dew?*
 29 – *From whose womb has come the ice? And the frost of heaven, who has given it birth? You?*
 31 – *Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades, or loose the cords of Orion? Can you lead forth a constellation in its season, and guide the Bear with her satellites? Do you know the ordinances of the heavens, or fix their rule over the earth?*
 34 – *Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, and make it rain? Can you send forth lightning?*
 36 – *Were you the one who put wisdom in the innermost being and gave understanding to the mind?*
 39 – *Can you hunt the prey for the lion?*
 41 – *Do you prepare for the raven its nourishment?*

You think you have questions for God!?

- 39:1 – *Do you know the time the mountain goats give birth?*
 5 – *“Who sent out the wild donkey free?*
 9 – *Will the wild ox consent to serve you?*
 19 – *Do you give the horse his might? Do you clothe his neck with a mane? Do you make him leap like the locust?*
 26 – *Is it by your understanding that the hawk soars? Is it at your command that the eagle mounts up, and makes his nest on high?*
 40:1 – *Then the Lord said to Job, Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty?” Let him who reproves God answer.*

“Come on Job, speak up, I can’t hear you; you wanted to talk, let’s talk.”

Vs.3 – *“Then Job answered, “Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to Thee? I lay my hand on my mouth. Once I have spoken, and I will not answer; even twice, and I will add no more.”*

“Now we’re making progress. But we’re not done yet. You wanted answers, Job, so do I.”

v.6 – *“Then the Lord answered Job out of the storm, and said, “Now gird up your loins like a man; I will ask you, and you instruct Me. Will you really annul My judgment? Will you condemn Me that you may be justified? Or do you have an arm like god, and can you thunder with a voice like His?*

V.10 – *Let’s see you humble the proud.*

V.15 – *Let’s see you lasso Behemoth. Can you tame the dinosaur or the hippopotamus?*

41:1 – *Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook?*

“You want My job, Job? Let’s see what you’ve got!

Then here it comes – **vs.11** - *Who has given to Me that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is Mine.*

Do you see what God is saying?

Job, you don't know the first thing about how to rule My universe and you're questioning Me about what I'm doing in your life!

You don't know the most basic facts about 99.99% of how the *natural* world works and what keeps it going, but you think you know enough to argue with Me and question My judgment. You think I answer to you? You think I need to hear you out and reevaluate what I'm doing? Why now? Why all of a sudden are you so interested in My business? Have I been in a pinch before and needed your advice?

The point is made. Job gets it.

42:1 – *“Then Job answered the Lord, and said, “I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge [indeed]? Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Hear now and I will speak, I will ask You, and You instruct me. I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees you; therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes.”*

Perfect! God was right. Satan was wrong.

In vs.7-9, God vindicated Job before his friends.
And in vs.10-17, God restored Job's fortunes and blessed his latter days more than the former, and gave him 10 more children, plus grandchildren and great-grandchildren, four generations, 140 more years, and Job died an old man and full of days.

What's the final lesson? What is it we need to receive from our suffering? One thing:

More of God.

You need God more than you need answers.
You need revelation more than you need relief.

Suffering is not your biggest problem in this life; idolatry is, self-worship is, presuming to be God is, setting yourself up as judge is, creating God in your own image is, thinking you know God when you don't is.

Whatever your view of God, it's too low. Repent.

And notice what God doesn't do: He doesn't answer the question “Why do the righteous suffer?” Why? Because He doesn't owe you an explanation for how he governs his universe, for how he manages his creation. Does not the potter have a right over the clay? Who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, “Why did you make me like this, will it?” God doesn't answer to you. And He doesn't have to answer all your questions to be worthy of your repentance, trust, obedience, love, and worship.

On the other hand, He has answered to you. “He has told you O man,” what He wants you to know. He has revealed Himself to you in the Scripture and ultimately in His Son, Jesus.

That's enough! You don't need to know anymore than that. Embrace the things revealed, and let God be God and know things you don't.

So what have we learned in this series about evil and suffering? There are no easy answers. But behind it all and over it all and through it all there is an ever-present, all-knowing, infinitely wise, good, glorious, and sovereign God who loves us and cares for us and is worthy of our trust and our worship.

For all the complexities of this life, there will never be enough answers; there will always be enough God. You don't need to *be* Him, you just need to *trust* Him.

Prove Satan wrong by maintaining a steadfast faith that endures suffering patiently because the demonstration of the worth of God in the faith and reverence of his people is the most important issue in suffering.

Believe with all your heart in the absolute sovereignty of God. Believe with all your heart that everything He does is right and good. Repent of all the times you have doubted God or found fault with Him in the way He has treated you. Be satisfied with His holy and perfect will.

After Mary, his wife of 39 years, died of rheumatic fever, George Mueller said at her memorial service, *I miss her in numberless ways, and shall miss her yet more and more. But as a child of God, and as a servant of the Lord Jesus, I bow, I am satisfied with the will of my Heavenly Father, I seek by perfect submission to his holy will to glorify him, I kiss continually the hand that has thus afflicted me.*

Believe with me that God's grace is sufficient to enable you to say the same thing.

Let's pray.

Father, there's so much that we don't understand. Give us grace to submit to your holy will in our lives even when your holy will includes sorrowful loss and painful affliction. Through it, I lead us to new heights in our understanding, from *"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear,* to *"But now my eye sees You."* That's our greatest need anyway: not less suffering but more seeing and more being satisfied with You. Give us patient, persevering faith in Jesus, knowing that all our momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison because we belong to Him. In His name we pray, Amen.