

Job and the Problem of Pain

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The Problem of Pain

Table of Contents

Introduction	p. 2
The Problem of Pain	p. 4
The Value of Pain	p. 18
The Book of Job	p. 26
Prologue	p. 28
The Discussion Down at the Dump	p. 34
Zophar’s Advice and Job’s Continued Response to His Friends	p. 45
Second Round of Talks	p. 51
Third Round of Talks	p. 60
Elihu Intervenes	p. 70
God Answers..... and Job..... Finally..... “Understands”	p. 77
Conclusion	p. 82
Bibliography	p. 86

Words in Blue – Biblical Verses

Words in Red – The Words of Jesus

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The Problem of Pain

Introduction:

In the following pages, I will be discussing one of life's more perplexing questions. One of the more common difficulties that people have with the whole idea of an infinitely powerful, yet loving, God is found in the following question: Why does an all-loving, omnipotent God allow His people to suffer so much? That is, why is there so much pain in the world?

There are several ways in which people have attempted to answer that question. This treatise will review three of these:

- The philosophic answer is that there is the necessity of pain in a world where mankind has been given free will. C.S. Lewis wrote an excellent book entitled *The Problem of Pain* in which he details the philosophical/logical reasons for pain in our world. Norman Geisler and Winfried Corduan expanded on those same concepts in their excellent book, *Philosophy of Religion*. These three men used their human logic to attempt to explain why an omniscient, omnipotent, all-loving God decided to create a world in which His people do experience pain. I believe that their answer is the best that has been offered from the world of philosophy (using human logical arguments). However, I also believe that the answer that Job receives from God is the best answer, overall, to this question.
- There are many that have concluded that "pain" has certain beneficial effects that even a loving God may want His children to experience in this relatively short time that they spend on this earth. These benefits will be discussed.
- The answer that God Himself told His followers came through the writing of a very famous book in the *Holy Bible*, the book of "Job". This entire book looks at this question... and God, Himself tells us how He wants us to look at this "problem of pain" as we face it throughout our life on this earth.

I certainly believe that the answer given in the book of Job is the most important one of the three above... at least it was in my life. Therefore, the majority of this treatise will be spent in a detailed review of this classic Old Testament book. However, all three types of answers have significant value. They will be discussed in the order listed above.

I am writing this treatise in a different manner than my other treatises on biblical topics. For one thing, I am writing this book primarily as a guide to the lecture series that I plan to give on this subject... not primarily to simply be read as a stand-alone book. Compared to my typical lectures, this topic will involve much more audience participation. I will often pose questions that I hope will stimulate thoughtful conversation during the lectures. The answers will not be given in the text but, instead, they may vary, depending on the members' responses in any particular class. Each class will try to determine the answers to these perplexing questions faced by every person at some time during their lifetime. When writing about Job, I will typically give one or more Bible verses that I believe address the particular question under consideration. However, I am hopeful that everyone involved will draw on their own life experiences as well as

The Problem of Pain

their common sense when answering the questions. I definitely hope that everyone will read along in the *Book of Job* as we go forward from week to week. The goal of this course is to come to a better understanding and, hopefully, a better acceptance of the pain and suffering that all humans must endure in their lives on earth – and that, obviously, God allows into our lives.

The first section of this treatise will review, in some detail, the major points given by C.S. Lewis (*The Problem of Pain*), Norman Geisler and Winfried Corduan (*Philosophy of Religion*). They are of the opinion that pain is an inevitable consequence of the free will God gives to all humanity. Ideally, these books should be referenced too... especially the book by Lewis. However, this is not imperative as I will cover the most important points in the first section of this lecture series.

The Problem of Pain

The Problem of Pain:

C.S. Lewis is considered by many to be the greatest Christian theologian of the twentieth century. In 1940, he wrote a treatise on the subject of the pain that is so prevalent in our world. This pain includes the physical and emotional; both can be devastating at times. He pointed out that the existence of pain is one of the primary reasons that some people do not believe in a loving God... the God of Christianity. Lewis stated that when he himself was an atheist, he felt that the condition of the world and the people who populate it caused him to utter, “If you ask me to believe that this is the work of a benevolent and omnipotent spirit, I reply that all the evidence points in the opposite direction. Either there is no spirit behind the universe, or else a spirit indifferent to good and evil, or else an evil spirit.” (*The Problem of Pain*, p.15) As it turned out, Lewis did eventually become a very strong Christian, with great faith in Jesus, his Savior. At one point after his conversion, he wrote his now famous treatise on the topic of pain, and why he believed it is such an integral part of our world. His conclusions are what we will be reviewing here.

Lewis noted in the preface of his book, that it would be wrong to get the impression after reading his arguments for the logical inclusion of pain in our fallen world, that he was not subject to the same fears and anguish that most all humans suffer when faced with painful situations. He noted that although he was convinced that his conclusions were solid concerning the necessity of pain in the world that God created, the mere understanding of this fact did not help him very much in regard to his ability to face adversity, either physical or emotional. He went on to say to his readers that what he offered them was his “conviction that when pain is to be borne, a little courage helps more than much knowledge, a little human sympathy more than much courage, and the least tincture of the love of God more than all.” (ibid, p.10)

Geisler and Corduan began addressing the same premise as did Lewis. That is, they wanted to answer those who denigrated the God of Christianity, if He even existed, because of the pain that is so prevalent in our world. These two theologians then went into great detail in their defense of the universe that God chose to create – the one that we all now live in. They noted the “conflict between God’s obligation to create the best world and the apparent reality that this world is not the best He could have created.” (*Philosophy of Religion*, p.295) Then they explained why the Christian God of all-power and love would choose to create just such a world!

Before going any further, let me point out that I will not be giving any defense here for the existence of the God of Christianity – God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit – the Trinity (yet still only one God). In my opinion, there is overwhelming evidence for God’s existence and for the fact that God is, indeed, a God of infinite love (e.g. recall what Jesus did for all mankind). I have gone into the massive evidence for this in many other lectures. Recognizing that our God is real, all-powerful and all-loving, He surely must create the best of all possible worlds. To do anything else would make Him less than perfect. Our object here is just to see if we can determine, using our **limited human logic**, why this world satisfies those goals of His – since we know, a priori, it must! Nothing can frustrate God’s plans!

The Problem of Pain

Let us start by presenting the problem posed by C.S. Lewis, “If God were good, He would wish to make His creatures perfectly happy, and if God were almighty, He would be able to do what He wished. But the creatures are not happy. Therefore, God lacks either goodness, or power, or both.” (*The Problem of Pain*, p. 26)

The above quote by Lewis puts the problem out there for us to analyze. It certainly does seem reasonable that a loving God would want to create people to be happy. I have no issue with that portion of the premise. Also, if God is almighty, and He is, He certainly should be able to accomplish that task. It is also true that no one seems to skate through this life here on earth perpetually happy and worry-free. So where is the flaw in Lewis’ argument above? I suggest that the premise stated by Lewis is far too simplistic (he realizes this as well). As we will see, there is more to God’s overall plan for His creation than what takes place in this world. He has much bigger plans for His children.

We must delve much deeper into the possibilities open to an omnipotent God as He considered the creation of the world. Just what other worlds may have been open for Him to create? As we analyze this, we may see that He did create the best of all possible worlds, *given what He wanted to achieve with His creation in this world*. Let us take a look...

Let us start with listing all of the possible types of worlds that God could have created:

- God could have created nothing at all – since this obviously was not His choice, little time will be spent on trying to decide if this would have been the best choice. It is true that this would have been a reasonable decision. God is totally self-sufficient. There would be nothing immoral about not creating other things. The fact is, though, that God did choose to create. Therefore, if we can show that in creating the world that He ultimately did create, He made a good, moral decision, there will be no reason to address why He chose to create ... as opposed to not creating anything at all. If, on the other hand, all of His other choices result in bad outcomes, the choice to *not create* would have been the best. We shall see that this is not the case.
- God could have created *robots* that never would choose to sin - God could have insured that all of His creation behaved perfectly from their inception, by simply creating robotic creatures – people and angels that had no choice but to follow His will. Hence, there would never have been any sin, never have been a fallen world, never have been a Satan. Of course, there would never have been the opportunity for His creation to demonstrate true love and allegiance. Robots cannot really give or receive love. Given that one of the foremost character traits of God is His loving kindness, it is very difficult to imagine that He would desire this kind of creation ... if there were a better alternative, and there is.
- God could have created a world where creatures always choose to sin – This would obviously not be the best of all possible worlds so no more will be said about this possibility.

The Problem of Pain

- God could have created creatures that could sin, but never choose to do so – This is an interesting concept. Here is how Geisler and Corduan put it, “If God will produce in the end a condition for free creatures where there will be no more sinning (Heaven), why did He not make it this way from the beginning?” (*Philosophy of Religion*, p.307) “It would seem best to create free creatures who do not sin from the beginning, rather than permit sin and evil to produce in the end what could have been done in the beginning without all the waste and suffering. Why beat one’s head on the wall because it feels so good when it is over? It even feels better not to have done it in the first place.” (ibid) This type of world presupposes that God would create the circumstances from second to second that would result in every creature wanting (using his free will) to choose the proper, sinless choice every time. This idea surely has the sense of being an oxymoron – that is, creating a person with free will, yet make it so that they will use this free will to always choose what God would choose.
- God could create a world in which people *really do* have free will. This is the world that God did create. Since the original sin of Adam and Eve, mankind has been born with a fallen nature. People may choose to follow Him in every act and avoid sinning... or they may choose to sin. However, God knows that without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, inevitably man will choose to sin at some point.

People may choose Jesus as their Savior, or they may reject this opportunity. They may choose to love God, or reject Him. This type of creation, that of true free will, allows for the true expression of love and choice. The question is, of course, is it the best type of creation? Since this is the world we live in, it must be so, since God made it. If it is the best world possible, then why? Since it is obvious that God made the world and His creation with the free will to sin, and experience painful situations, He must have had very good reasons. It is certainly true that our human logic may not be able to ascertain these reasons. That is not unreasonable. On the other hand, some philosopher/theologians such as the three I am referencing here, believe they have satisfactory answers to show why we do live in the best of all possible worlds – even given the pain that is present in this world.

Our goal in the next few pages is to demonstrate that God produced the best possible world attainable from an absolutely perfect being. Anything less would show that the God of this world is less than perfect... and the Christian God is a perfect being. So, for the God of Christianity to be the one true God, this world must show evidence that it is the best a perfect God could create. Can this be done? Yes, but *we must expand our view of this world to the view that an all-knowing, all-present, all-powerful God has as He looks at His universe from eternity past to eternity future.* This is the key to our understanding of God’s creation. Can this be done? Not perfectly, but I believe that we can get a reasonable understanding of how God may well be looking at us and our place in the universe at this time and in the future. Let us give it a try.

The Problem of Pain

The problem restated is that God must do His best and create the best possible world... let me make that *universe*... and yet there currently is great evidence that the *world* we now live in is not so great. That is true if we limit our view to the current time and current world. God certainly does not and nor should we! Let us look at this postulate:

- This is *not* the best possible world, but *it is the best possible world to lead mankind to the best possible eternity* in the all-encompassing universe of God. If this “brief instant of time” that each person spends on the earth is used by an omniscient, omnipotent God to bring His children (those who use their free will to join His family) to a perfect Heaven where they spend eternity in a glorious, sinless state of perfection, then the time we spend on earth should be measured by how it prepares us for Heaven... not simply how we feel during our years while on this “training ground.” This is the way Geisler puts it, “A sinless Heaven is better than an evil earth, but there was no way for God to achieve a sinless Heaven unless He created beings that would sin and did sin in order that out of their sin He could produce the best possible world (Heaven) where beings would not sin.” [Remember that God did not do this for the angels... and what happened? Satan chose to sin and now will spend eternity separated from God with one-third of the other angels. They have no chance of redemption].

As long as there is an all-powerful God, which there is, He can use this current world to test and train people to better prepare them for their roles in eternal Heaven... and that is what the Bible tells us He is doing. Remember, however, we all now live in a fallen world. We must return to God through a relationship with Jesus in order to one day enter into Heaven. We must freely give our self back to God at some point in our life. Lewis says that “The human spirit will not even try to surrender self-will as long as all seems to be well with it.” There are many ways that people learn of their need to turn to God. One very important was is through their experience of pain and suffering. “Pain shatters the illusion that all is well. Pain plants the flag of truth within the fortress of a rebel soul.” (*The Problem of Pain*, p. 95) Often it is very hard to turn our thoughts to God when all is going smoothly... even for Christians. As Lewis says, “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains. It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” (ibid, p. 93) “There is one right act – that of self-surrender – which cannot be willed to the height by fallen creatures unless it is unpleasant” (ibid, p. 101) And finally, “tribulations cannot cease until God only sees us as remade or sees that our remaking is now hopeless.” (ibid, p. 107) Certainly, under virtually all imaginable circumstances, God will continue to use the difficulties of the world to mold His loved ones into the beings He wants them to be. Then, one day, they will go to live with their Father in Heaven... nevermore to experience any pain or suffering. All of the lessons God had planned for them while living on this earth will have been learned.

The Problem of Pain

So that is our premise:

- God gives humans free will as this trait is certainly required in a world where love can be expressed or withheld.
- This free will certainly can result in the choice to sin... the rejection of God and His will for one's life. That is what Adam and Eve eventually chose.
- The *fall of man* resulted in the evil/pain we now see in our world.
- God, however, uses the suffering in this world to help His children return to Him and become better people.
- This evil does not come from Him... but does come from mankind's misguided use of a wonderful gift from God... the gift of free will.

Now, we need to defend this premise by reviewing the nature of evil – which we certainly see exists on the earth today – and then show that the existence of this evil is not inconsistent with an omnipotent, perfect God.

The Problem of Evil:

Many atheists (and others who do not believe in the Christian God) postulate the following as a way to slander the conception of the Christian God:

1. God is the cause of everything
2. Evil exists
3. Therefore God causes evil

Christians do not believe that God is the author of evil/sin. Instead, they postulate the following:

1. God is the efficient cause of every finite substance (but nothing else)
2. Evil is not a substance
3. God is therefore not the cause of evil

Put in another way, God created all material things and gave them their properties. For example, He created water and gave it certain physical and chemical properties. He gave our universe certain amazing forces such as gravity. He gave humans many physical and mental character traits including a moral compass. He also gave them the free will to choose to follow or to reject Him. God did this because without free will there can be no opportunity to truly love. Apparently, God wanted His creation to have this opportunity... not only to love one another, but to love Him.

When a person uses his/her free will to reject the will of God this is sin and defined as evil. *This evil act, however, was not caused or created by God.* As Geisler notes, "Evil has no existence of its own; it exists only in substances that God has created but it has no subsistence of its own." (*Philosophy of Religion*, p. 320) **Mankind uses their free will to sin and commit evil acts. Fallen angels and man are the cause of evil.** "Evil results when the free creature turns away from the infinite good of the Creator to the lesser goods of creatures." (ibid, p. 324)

The Problem of Pain

Augustine said that there is an absolutely good God who chose to create men and women with free wills. These creatures freely choose the lesser good for and of themselves over the perfect good of God, resulting in sin and the corruption of the world. God, in His infinite power and love, is nevertheless able to use these evil actions for the greater good... *in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

Romans 8:28

“The divine Architect of the universe knows how to bring an ordered harmony out of a world of free but evil creatures.” (ibid, p. 325)

To summarize, the Christian philosopher’s conception of evil is as follows:

- Evil has no substance of its own. It is a privation or corruption of the essence of another
- God causes only substantive things. He does not cause evil.
- God does create people with free wills.
- Moral evil is rooted in human free will. Free will is a good thing, but its abuse by mankind results in evil.
- Human nature is never totally corrupted by evil... men and women are always responsible for their actions (except, I believe, when mentally ill with a psychosis or dealing with a similar mental problem such as severe retardation).
- The grace of God enables men and women the potential to free themselves of their sinful propensities (but *only as they continually submit to the Holy Spirit after being saved by Jesus*) and to strive for sanctification as they live out the remainder of their lives on earth.

Now it is time to show why this world filled with evil/pain is still the best possible world that God could have created given His desire to create a universe with free-willed men and women – thus having the ability to demonstrate true love.

In the seventeenth century, Pierre Bayle posited the following:

- Evil exists
- An omnipotent God would destroy evil
- A benevolent God would destroy evil
- Therefore, either:
 1. God is not omnipotent
 2. God is not benevolent
 3. God does not exist

The Christian does believe that God will destroy evil... therefore, the Christian says that Bayle is wrong only in that Bayle suggests in his flow chart above that evil must already have been defeated. The Christian philosopher counters that this is not true and certainly there is no reason that it need be true.

The Problem of Pain

Let us once again note why God is not culpable for the evil we see in the world today:

- God is responsible for those acts He actually performs
- God never performs evil acts
- God created mankind with free will to choose to follow Him and His edicts or to reject Him
- God *cannot do the impossible* and prevent *free* people from choosing sin/evil
- When mankind, using free choice, rejects God, this is sin... which is evil
- Therefore, mankind (and fallen angels) freely chooses evil

When we earlier reviewed the possible types of world that God could have created, three possibilities were quickly rejected as being less than the best: no world at all, a world with robots – i.e. no free will, and a world where people would always choose evil. I believe that the rejection of these three possible choices is easy to understand. On the other hand, there was one choice other than our actual world that bears a little more scrutiny... a world where God produces free creatures that use their free will to always choose to follow Him... that is, a world where evil does not exist, a morally good world. Some theologians believe that this is a possibility. How could this be done? Well, God could make it so that He intervened to prevent any evil acts. This would not work as even the thought of an evil act is evil... as Jesus teaches us. Another possibility is that God only creates those creatures that he knew would never choose to sin. This does not seem plausible either as the whole point of God giving mankind free will was to let them decide whether they wanted to follow God... or reject Him. If God only created beings that could only follow Him, this would be too similar to the robot example – that is, there really would not be free will. One other point, in a world of this type, men and women would indeed have less obstacles to overcome as they lived out their lives on earth... and less opportunity to learn valuable lessons. Working through obstacles and conflict in life does lead to greater wisdom and superior character, at least in those people who rely on God.

Let us continue now to assess whether this world we live in is the best possible to achieve God's purposes. Can all the evil brought about by human free will be justified? We certainly can agree that this is a world where most people would not like to spend eternity. In other words, most people could imagine a better place to live. However, we should be able to demonstrate that it is the best world to *lead us to* the ultimate perfect world of Heaven – a place, I contend, where the majority of people would love to spend eternity. If our current world is not the best world to prepare us for Heaven, then God did not do His best... meaning that the God of this world would not be the Christian God. So, let us analyze this situation.

Most would agree that evil can lead to a greater good. Therefore, *permitting* evil can lead to a greater good. Pain for the sake of pain is absurd. However, permitting pain so that a good outcome will eventuate makes a lot of sense and is commonly done. For example, people undergo painful operations to be cured of life-threatening diseases. Certain people perform heroic acts to save others, even though their act may result in their death! There are innumerable examples of painful acts that result in wonderful outcomes. Maybe the best examples relate to

The Problem of Pain

the difficult, and at times even painful, training necessary to reach goals in life. As the saying goes, “No pain, no gain.” That can be said about exercise, school work, athletic competition, and so many other endeavors in life. It also can be said about a Christian’s striving toward sanctification... and ultimately his striving for his heavenly home.

Let us now present the Christian theologian’s argument that our world is the best of all possible “preparatory” worlds.

First, let me list some basic tenants and then discuss their veracity:

- God is the best being possible. We can conceive of a “world” better than our current world... e.g. Heaven. Therefore, we can infer that God is using this world to lead us to Heaven, and that this world is the best world for that purpose (or else God would have chosen another)
- Given the above statement, our world is even better than a morally good world
- There is evidence that the Heaven we aspire to actually exists (since there is excellent evidence that the Bible is true and it speaks of a perfect place called Heaven)

The argument that our current world is the best world that God could create for us to prepare us for Heaven is as follows:

- God is perfect, omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient and all loving
- Producing anything but the best possible world would be evil for such a God
- An absolutely perfect being cannot produce evil
- God did make this world
- The world as it is now is not the best world imaginable
- Therefore, there must be a better, perfect world to come, of which our current world is a necessary prelude... we call this next “world”... the final “world”... Heaven

Let us now discuss the reasons why it was better for God to create a world that allowed mankind to sin instead of producing a world that somehow was morally good (i.e. mankind did not sin). [Remember, it is extremely difficult to imagine a world where God would allow for free will to be expressed that could possibly lead to a morally good world]. It is important to keep in mind that God’s ultimate goal is Heaven. Therefore, the better question is “What type of existence best prepares a person for Heaven?”

Geisler and Corduan maintain that “permitting an evil world is the best way to achieve the **morally best world**. A world with the greater number of moral virtues is morally better than one with a lesser number of them.” “**Certain virtues like courage, fortitude, mercy and forgiveness are attainable only in a world where sin occurs.**” (ibid, p. 347)

Although it may seem odd, there is great training for mankind in a world where evil is present. For example, the opportunity to show love, kindness, sympathy, and empathy are much improved when sin induces the hardships that people must face so often in our current state of

The Problem of Pain

existence. Keep in mind that it is God's plan to produce the best possible world... this must be true as God would want and do no less. Given that we are certainly not in that kind of world today, that world must be Heaven... just as the Bible tells us it is. To summarize then:

- God must produce the morally best world He can... if He is going to produce a moral world at all.
- *Evil serves as a tool* to help mankind develop and reach to their highest possible virtues while on this earth
- Given this, an "intermediate world" with sin in it is better than an "intermediate world" where evil never did occur. This is true because this world of ours is only a stopping off place, a place of training as mankind prepares for Heaven.

Geisler notes the following: "A world where sin never materializes is *conceivable* but it may not be the *most desirable* morally. **If evil is not permitted, then it cannot be defeated.** Like automobiles, a tested world is better than an untested one. Or, to put it another way, no boxer can beat an opponent without getting into the ring. God may have permitted evil in order to defeat it. If evil is not allowed, then the higher virtues cannot be attained. No pain, no gain. Tribulation works patience. There is no way to experience the joy of forgiveness without allowing the fall into sin. So, a world where evil is not defeated and the higher goods attained would not be the best world achievable. Therefore, while a world where sin does not occur is *theoretically conceivable*, it would be *morally inferior*." (*The Problem of Evil*, [Baker Encyclopedia of Apologetics](#), Norman Geisler)

C. S. Lewis looks at it this way, "if God is wiser than we, His judgment must differ from ours on many things, and not the least on good and evil. What seems to us good may therefore not be good in His eyes, and what seems to us evil may not be evil." (*The Problem of Pain*, p. 37)

One final point...

What about pain and suffering that is not a direct result of man's free will?

There are some who understand and accept the logic of the argument above yet still ask why God allows suffering that is unrelated to sinful choices made by men and women with free will. In other words, it seems entirely reasonable that allowing free will to people must result, at times, with those same people experiencing pain and suffering... both emotional and physical. However, why does God apparently allow even more pain and suffering via natural disasters and disease? Those wondering about this issue suggest that most of these cases of pain do not involve mankind's abuse of their God-given free will.

It does seem that not all of the suffering we see in our world today is directly related to the abuse of man's free will choices. Two good examples of this are the suffering that results from many illnesses and the horrible suffering that results from natural disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes. Just think of the recent earthquake in Haiti. What are we to make of

The Problem of Pain

this? Is God just piling on the suffering in these cases? Is this pain and suffering unnecessary and therefore an indictment of God?

Let us take a careful look at this type of suffering. It surely looks at first glance to be devoid of any relationship to the abuse of free will. However, that is not actually true. Keep in mind, please, that before the first, and arguably the most important abuse of free will, the world we lived in was incapable of natural disasters. Not only that, but there was no disease. Unfortunately, Adam and Eve made the decision to reject God's will for their lives and commit the first sin. Since that moment, as noted earlier, we have all lived in a fallen world... a world with many problems, natural disasters, sickness, and death. So, in fact, all of the apparent pain and suffering seen in our world **is a result** of the ill-advised use of mankind's free will... if Adam and Eve had continued to obey God, people would not experience any pain and suffering (of course that would be making the totally unrealistic assumption that none of their heirs would have used their free will to sin either).

Some may say that their sin was simply too long ago to matter with respect to events that are happening today. I would ask those people just what is the cut-off time when a sin related to abuse of free will no longer is relevant to pain and suffering in today's world? How about a 50 year limit? That would exempt Hitler from the discussion. I don't think many people would agree to that idea. Well, how about 4,000 years! That seems like a really long time... there should not be suffering and pain related to events way back then. Not true. Over 4,000 years ago Abraham sinned in sleeping with Hagar, which resulted in the birth of Ishmael. Ishmael is the father of the Arab race. Today, much of the grief in the Middle East is secondary to this misuse of free will... all those centuries ago. The point is that there can be no arbitrary cut-off when evaluating the painful effects of sinful acts committed in the past. Certainly, the original sin of Adam and Eve has had the worst effect of any individual sin... that free will abuse should not be ignored. Keep in mind that the entire creation was adversely effected due to that sin.

To the woman he said,

"I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' **Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you,** and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living. The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.

Gen 3:16-23

The Problem of Pain

Nevertheless, **death reigned from the time of Adam** to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come

Romans 5:14

For the **creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice**, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the **creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay**

Romans 8:20-21

As can be seen, the entire earth was changed after that first sin – the result of free will. The fall of man also resulted in the fall of all creation. All of creation awaits the second coming of the Lord when all mankind and all creation will be released from its “**bondage to decay.**”

Frankly, reading many books and articles on the topic of suffering not related to man’s free will, I noted that none of the other apologists looked at this issue as I did in the previous paragraphs. For whatever the reason, they decided not to reference the very ill-fated free will choice of Adam and Eve. Instead, these authors, such as Lewis, Geisler and Corduan (and others) did agree that there was pain and suffering in our world that was not caused directly by the sin of man. Although I disagree on this point – my reasons noted above – they all still point out that the pain and suffering caused by nature and illness still does not negate the concept of a loving Christian God. God simply allows free will to suffer its own consequences in our fallen world.

I will now review the reasons that Geisler and Corduan believe that a loving God allows calamity unrelated to man’s abuse of free will. First of all, these two writers say that *physical evil* (unrelated to free will abuse) is a necessary part of this morally best world we live in. Remember, no one is saying that we live in the best possible world ... yet... but, just that we live in the *best possible world that will lead us into Heaven* (which is actually the best world possible). Their argument is as follows:

- The kind of world where human beings freely do evil is the best way to produce a morally perfect world (Heaven) – certain lessons are learned in that kind of world that are necessary to best function in Heaven
- We live in that kind of a world
- Hence, our world is the best world *to lead to the perfect world...*Heaven
- *Physical evil* (that evil not caused by man’s abuse of free will ... that is, man’s sin) is a necessary part of this world we live in
- Therefore, *physical evil* is needed to produce a morally perfect world (Heaven)
- Therefore, God must permit physical evil as God must produce a morally perfect world – God cannot settle for “second best”

We have previously addressed point one above in some detail. The fourth point in the list above requires our attention. Does our world really need physical evil? If it does, the final two lines in the argument above easily follow. Let us take a look at why we need physical evil in the world we live in. First of all, since I have shown that all the evil we see in our world is a direct

The Problem of Pain

result of original sin (in my opinion), I must re-define the expression “physical evil” somewhat. We shall **define physical evil as pain and suffering that affects humanity due to sickness, pestilence and/or forces of nature (beyond human control)**. Causes include:

- Satan and demons are the cause of some physical evil ... including certain illnesses
- Natural Laws create events that result in certain physical evils (such as hurricanes and earthquakes)
- Some physical evils are necessary for humans to learn important life lessons, that would otherwise not be learned (for example, sympathy, endurance, courage)
- Certain physical pain and suffering is needed as important moral and physical warnings

I believe that God simply allows our **fallen world** to function as a result of the laws of nature that He saw fit to implement long ago. [I do not know how God created a perfect environment in the Garden of Eden... but He did]. It may be worth noting these four fundamental laws of nature. They are: gravity, the weak nuclear force, the strong nuclear force, and the electromagnetic force. Every interaction that we see happening between any size particles in the universe can be explained (at least to a great degree) by these forces. Of course, God can intervene anytime He wants to alter their course when He deems appropriate... we call this intervention a miracle. Surely, God has done this in the past. Moses parted the Red Sea. Jesus walked on water; Jesus turned water into wine. Several people were raised from the dead. The list goes on. On the other hand, these interventions were, and still are, relatively few and far between. Too many alterations of natural laws would result in perplexing situations. Many times changing a natural event may well help some people... while hurting others. Some may desperately want rain... others living nearby may be fearing a flood. A lot of sun during the summer months may help one family, while causing harm to another. There are innumerable examples of how altering the course of nature may well help some, while harming many others.

The Bible suggests that Satan and his demons have a role to play in this form of suffering (i.e. physical evil). Satan is the god of this world, and he does have the capability to cause much harm to the earth and God’s children. In fact, that is one of the primary goals of his miserable existence. The Bible notes that Satan is the cause behind many illnesses:

- On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, "**Woman, you are set free from your infirmity.**" Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God. Luke 13:10-13 Jesus then went on to say, "**should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?**" Luke 13:16
- So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head. Job 2:7

The Problem of Pain

Here is a list of reasons why Geisler and Corduan believe our world needs physical evil to lead to the best world possible... that is, Heaven:

- Higher degrees of many valuable personal attributes are achievable when people deal with various physical evils. For example, traits such as courage, sympathy, endurance and patience are virtues best learned obtained in this type of a world... that is, under trial.
- There is no doubt that dealing with physical evils does bring some people into a saving relationship with Jesus. In fact, I have two good friends who became Christians soon after they lost their respective fathers. After this terrible physical evil (sickness leading to death), they each began searching for answers... this search led them to Jesus and salvation... and has continued with their ongoing sanctification over the years.
- Some physical evil is secondary to the free choices of Satan and his minions (demons) – Job was attacked by Satan. Paul was given a thorn in the flesh. Paul even tells us why... “To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me”
2 Cor 12:7 Even here we see that God used a demon to add to the character of His servant, Paul.
- Some physical evil helps mankind as a warning... pain from touching a hot stove can teach a baby to keep away in the future... thereby avoiding more significant harm. Horrendous physical harm results when disease limits the ability to feel pain. This is probably best shown in the terrible plight of lepers. They may actually lose various body parts due to their lack of sensation caused by their disease. One more example is found in the right lower quadrant abdominal pain that alerts patients to seek care for potential appendicitis (before it is too late). Pain, both physical and emotional, may also result in people thinking of eternal things and taking them more seriously... this may lead them to the seeking out God and His Son, Jesus.
- Our Laws of Nature do allow our universe to run amazingly well. On the other hand, these same Laws, on rare occasions, do bring with them certain painful events such as tornados, hurricanes, forest fires, earthquakes and floods. Even these events bring some good *over time*. Of course, they often bring great suffering to people as well. Yet, this is where we must remember that God is using all of these events and all other events in people’s lives to lead them first to His Son, Jesus for salvation... and then toward sanctification. God’s goal in this world is that all of His children become more like Jesus as they live out their lives. The final goal of God is definitely not attained in this world... but in the next!

Obviously, our current world has much evil in it. This manifests itself typically by producing much pain and suffering. Most people would prefer not to experience this suffering. I know I prefer a life of pure joy and happiness. On the other hand, God knows what is best for His creation. “We want, not so much a Father in Heaven, but a Grandfather in Heaven.” (ibid, p. 40) Lewis goes on to note that it is abundantly obvious that God is not just someone who

The Problem of Pain

gives His children everything they ask for while on this earth. He is not like the prototypical grandfather. Yet, we certainly have been given plenty of evidence of His incredible love for us. The conclusion we must draw is that God has much more important plans for us than to simply just make us happy during our incredibly short sojourn on this earth.

God is the quintessential Father. He is in the process of preparing us for our role in eternity... this requires Him to mold us into the creatures He wants us to be. Our preparation for Heaven requires our gaining valuable knowledge through our experience with pain and suffering while on earth. We may not like it, but that is the way it is. Lewis adds, “We may wish, indeed, that we were of so little account to God that He left us alone to follow our natural impulses – that He would give over trying to train us into something so unlike our natural selves; but once again, we are asking not for more Love, but for less.” (ibid, p. 44) “He must labor to make us lovable. When we are such as He can love without impediment, we shall, in fact, be happy. (ibid, p.48)

Let me put it another way. There are many difficult things that a great football coach will subject his players to in a tough training camp in order to best prepare them for the regular season. Many of these training rituals would never be used once the season begins... but, they all would have been of value for each and every player on his team. If the coach prepared them properly, all of the players would be prepared to give their peak performance from the first day of the regular season. That is the way I believe God looks at this time on earth – it is our tryout camp, then our training ground, to prepare us for an eternity with Him in Heaven.

Conclusion:

In summary, there is no doubt that God has created a world populated by people with free will. The apparent reason would seem to be that God wanted each person to be able to experience the attribute of love. This requires the opportunity to reject love... even to have the ability to choose to hate. Everyone is created with the opportunity to either follow God and His Law, or reject God. Ever since the fall of man, which resulted from the sin of Adam and Eve, it has been a practical impossibility for mankind to lead a perfect life since we are all born with a fallen nature... this is referred to as “original sin”. Free will has allowed evil to enter our current world. This, of course, would be terrible if this world were the only world that God had planned for His creation. It is not. Instead, the evil in our current world is used for our ultimate good as God in His omnipotence and omniscience uses it to test and train His elect (Christians) for their final eternal home... Heaven. Once a Christian reaches Heaven, he/she will have actually benefited from their time on this earth, including the pain and suffering that they have had to endure... and from which they have learned a great deal. That is why we currently live in the best possible world... a world excellently equipped to lead us to Heaven.

The Problem of Pain

The Value of Pain:

We have just completed the section of this treatise showing reasons why God may well have allowed our world to be a world where evil, pain, and suffering exist. At least, the attempt was made to show the reasons from a logical/philosophical point of view. One of the conclusions in that discussion was that God would actually want our current world to have difficult, even painful problems for His children from which to learn valuable lessons for their betterment in the world to come. There are very likely several other very good reasons why God allows evil to exist at this present time. This next section will detail many of these reasons for suffering. Most of them have been noted by God in His scriptures.

1. God wants to **test our faith** and **allow us to exercise our faith** – recall that “[without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.](#)” Heb 11:6

[In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.](#) 1 Peter 1:6-9

[We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers.](#) 2 Cor 1:8-11

When people are faced with the myriad of problems that arise in the course of everyone's life, they really do not have too many options as to how to face them. They can give up and “hide” themselves in a depressed state of mind. This often involves extended periods of sleeping and many hours alone with constant depressing thoughts. Better, of course, is to turn the problem over to God... and let His will be done on His own schedule. Of course, this is not easy for many people. If one is able to turn his/her problems over to God by faith, knowing that God will somehow take care of every one of His children - and that means you if you are a Christian – a person will be able to continue on in their daily life with a markedly better outlook. As Christians are able to do this throughout their lifetime, they will eventually realize that God really does work things out even in the worst of times. Learning this by actually living through many of these experiences (of episodic problems that would typically bring much worry and suffering) that are relieved successfully by turning to God in faith, will be used by God to

The Problem of Pain

build a better person as the years go by. The eventual outcome, of course, is a more Christ-like person – a person ready for their ultimate home in Heaven one day.

2. **Testing develops perseverance:**

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” James 1:2-4

Of course, this concept can be a very worrisome one itself. We do have the promise of God that He will not give His children more than we can handle. “No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.” 1 Cor 10:13

I must admit that this one is difficult to totally understand. At least, it gives me pause to think. What about those Christians who commit suicide? Tough question, indeed. Apparently, for these people, the way out turned out to be God taking them home to be with Him.

3. As we build our faith, **we can become increasingly sure of our Heavenly destination:**

Given the pain and suffering that so many Christians must endure in this life on earth... some more than others, if it were not for the sure hope of Heaven, we should be pitied.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Heb 11:1
If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.

1 Cor 15:19

The fact is, however, that we do have the sure hope of Heaven and therefore can endure the tribulation that we must face while here on earth. Never forget that the word Paul uses for hope in this context does translate as a “sure hope” – something that is guaranteed to come to fruition in the future.

We have a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time Titus 1:2

While we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. Titus 2:13-14

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" -- 1 Cor 2:9

Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. Phil 3:20- 21
Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us

The Problem of Pain

an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

2 Cor 4:16-18

4. Pain is a critically important **sensor mechanism to protect our bodies from harm:**

This was discussed in the previous section. Our senses enable us to avoid many potentially harmful situations. These include our sense of smell, hearing, seeing, touch and taste. Although we do experience pain and suffering because of God's gift of these five senses, without them our lives would be much worse. In some instances, the lack of one or more of these senses can be devastating (e.g. leprosy – a disease in which the loss of sensation can lead to terrible deformities).

5. Tribulation to **keep Christians from pride:**

Probably the worst sin that exists is the sin of pride. At times, God may allow suffering into our lives to keep us from pride. There are times, typically when things are going really well, thanks to God's blessings on our lives, where we may begin to think that we are the reason for all of our apparent success. God can and will bring difficulties into the lives of His children to protect them from this heinous sin, when the need arises. An excellent example of this was told to us by Paul...

To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.

2 Cor 12:7

6. Suffering can **build valuable character traits:**

Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. Romans 5:3-5

Almost all of the pain and suffering that a person may experience in our world does give the opportunity for the development of fine character traits in that person or another. When a person experiences a fearful situation, the opportunity to show courage is there. When someone is hungry, this brings the opportunity for others to give of themselves and their possessions. Although it is amazing how wonderful God is in answering his children's prayers, His answers do not always come as quickly as many would want. Of course, His timing is what is best for us, and we have the opportunity to learn this, as well as patience, as we pray and wait for His intervention. The list goes on. The point is, God can and does use the prevalent suffering in our world to give His children the chance to grow in sanctification... to become more like His Son, Jesus.

The Problem of Pain

7. Suffering can help **bring us closer to God in obedience:**

During the days of Jesus' life on earth, He offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and He was heard because of His reverent submission. Although He was a son, He learned obedience from what He suffered and, once made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

Heb 5:7-10

But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! **This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.**" Acts 9:15-16

if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. 1 Peter 2:20-21

There are many examples in the Bible and outside the Bible of how suffering for Christ brings people closer to God. One great example is noted in the *Book of Acts*. Steven, the first Christian martyr, was being strong to the end for His Savior Jesus Christ. While being stoned for his belief in Jesus, **Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.**

"Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep. Acts 7:55-60 Quite obviously, God had given Stephen this beautiful vision in part because of Stephen's wonderful and courageous obedience to His Savior.

8. Trials can help **keep us from sin:**

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do--living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. 1 Peter 4:1-3

Every person will sin at some time... that is obvious. Most Christians, hopefully, are trying to obey Jesus and follow His commandments (as Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will obey what I command.") (John 14:15) On the other hand, many times it is extremely difficult to abstain from certain sins... typically they are habitual sins such as alcoholism, sexual sins, drug addiction, obesity, etc. However, even sins such as pride, gossip, and sinful displays of anger can be terribly difficult to control. One can imagine situations that God could manufacture using His providential care that would affect a

The Problem of Pain

person in such a way that he/she would no longer be tempted in one or more of those areas listed above. One very obvious example would be a person losing their virility due to an illness... this would result in a marked decrease in their tendency toward fornication. Many other examples could be given where trials that bring suffering and pain may also decrease a person's tendency to commit certain particular sins.

9. Trials can **help us comfort others**:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort. 2 Cor 1:3-7

In almost every case, anytime a Christian experiences a painful life situation, they learn much about themselves and about dealing with that particular issue. Later, these same people often can be of significant help in comforting and advising other brothers or sisters in Christ who may find themselves struggling with the same type of problem. Empathy can be a powerful tool for good.

10. Our response to suffering can be **a testimony to mankind and angels**:

Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him; Job 13:15

The entire story of Job was one where God used His great servant Job to show Satan that there His creation on earth was actually working out rather well. God chose Job to demonstrate to the evil Satan that there were humans that knew and loved God simply for who He was... and not just for what He could and would do for them. Although there were some tough moments in his sufferings, Job concluded that God was a great and wonderful God. Through his terrible sufferings, Job enabled God to show Satan and all of the other angels more about His own great glory and power. **Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.** Heb 12:1-3

The 12th chapter of Hebrews shows how man can show the angels in Heaven, and even those great Christian saints that have gone before us to Heaven just what Jesus can and will do for His children when we turn to Him in faith and “**throw off**” the sin that so

The Problem of Pain

easily ruins our relationship with God during this time here on earth. When we are living as we should in faith and deed, Jesus will do powerful things through us... often working through our trials. This can be a powerful testimony to others, both man and angels.

11. Trials can **show Christ within the Christian**:

I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. **I can do everything through him who gives me strength.** Phil 4:11-13

All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and **they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.** Acts 6:15

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, **so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.** For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. 2 Cor 4:6-11

If a Christian can keep his faith through the inevitable trials of life, he/she will know that God will see them through... not matter how painful and difficult the situation. Others will have the opportunity to see the Holy Spirit working through our lives, especially during times of trial. The issue here is related to just how effectively the Christian is at releasing his problem into the hands of his Heavenly Father. God, of course, asks all of us to give Him our problems and let Him handle them... He will do so in an excellent manner. As we learn to do this, and it certainly is difficult for some of us, we gain so much peace... and others can see Jesus in our countenance and our actions.

12. **Suffering may come as discipline for sin** in our lives:

Sin breaks our fellowship with God. There are times that God allows suffering into our lives as a punishment and a "wake-up" call to bring us back to Him. God is always ready to forgive us for the sin in our lives. **"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives."** 1 John 1:9-10

"My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all

The Problem of Pain

had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Heb 12:5-11

God disciplines His children because of His love for them. Just as a loving earthly father will correct his children and teach them how to live, our Heavenly Father will do as well. He does this to make us into the best possible man or woman... to ready us for our eternal role in Heaven. God really would be a bad father if He did not discipline His children... there is no question about it.

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction. Gal 6:7-8

To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. 1 Cor 5:5

In this situation, the Holy Spirit tells us that there are times that God allows Satan to actually “destroy the flesh” in order to preserve a person for their eternal Heavenly home. In some manner, God uses Satan to discipline a person – the important issue is the salvation of the person... not his/her comfort, or even happiness, while here on this earth.

13. Trials may **glorify God**: As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

"Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. John 9:1-3

Certainly the above verse is a blatant example of how God may use some painful situations to show His glory. In this case, Jesus healed the blind man resulting in a wonderful demonstration of His power and love. Of course, this also was incredibly useful show people that He was truly the Messiah and, in fact, the Son of God. There are many other examples of this in the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments. The book of Job shows one in particular...

Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil." "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face." Job 1:8-11

God will demonstrate to Satan and all the angels that He does have the love and respect of Job (and much of mankind), not because He makes them love Him... but, because of whom He is... a wonderful, loving, perfect God. Satan had challenged Job on this point, and God showed Satan was wrong. We certainly will discuss this much more in the last portion of this treatise.

The Problem of Pain

Conclusion:

God will use the pain and suffering that is so obviously present in our world to prepare his children for Heaven. There are innumerable lessons that can and will be learned as every Christian deals with the difficulties that each individual faces because of the free will God has instilled into His creation. Because of this preparation, those entering Heaven will be ready for all the wonderful plans God has in store for them. It is very true that our time on earth is at times very trying. Let us always remember that our omniscient God who loves everyone with an infinite love most certainly knows what He is doing... and He is doing what is best for each and every one of us. This brings us to the third portion of this treatise where we shall see God communicates this to Job, and all who read this great book, in an unusual, yet very effective and powerful manner.

The Problem of Pain

The Book of Job:

Introduction:

The book of *Job* is one of the more important books in the Old Testament. It is important and impressive on a number of different levels. For one thing, many people consider it the best piece of poetry of ancient times. It is typically studied in college literature or humanities courses as an example of the great writings of its time. Philosophy students glean intriguing insights on life through the study of this work. When studied in the college classroom, the professor almost invariably fails to recognize that the words and concepts that are being discussed have been written by God, Himself.

Most important to us, however, is to recognize that God is talking to every human through this amazing book and answering some of life's most perplexing questions in a beautifully sublime way – questions that every thinking man and woman has asked at some point in their lives, indeed, probably at many points during their lifetime. What does God want to tell us? The purpose of this course is to see if we together can find this out – if we succeed, there is no doubt that we will benefit greatly!

I believe that almost everyone has wondered, at times, about why there is so much pain in the world... or at least, why bad things happen to good people. Job certainly did! I hope that everyone will give their insights into these questions... and tell of their own difficulties with understanding this situation. I plan to give some baseline information from the book of *Job*, and then ask questions based on that information. Our goal will be to come to some understanding, if possible, on what God is trying to teach us from this, His book of *Job*.

Outline of the discussion of Job: This section will be divided into eight parts. The following will be the topics that will be covered:

1. Job – an introduction: setting and premise, questions posed
Chapter 1 & 2
2. The “Discussion Down at the Dump”
Chapter 3-10
3. Job replies to his three friends
Chapter 11-14
4. Job and friends’ second round of talks
Chapter 15-21
5. The third round of discussion between Job and his three friends
Chapter 22-31
6. Elihu comes on the scene
Chapter 32-37
7. God answers and Job finally..... understands. The essence of God’s answer is... I am God... and you are not.
Chapter 38-41

The Problem of Pain

8. Restoration - Summation

Chapter 42

Recognize that many of the things that we read in the book of *Job* tell the reader what the characters in the discourse believed to be true. However, we must remember that many of their beliefs certainly are NOT, in fact, true. God simply uses the discussion between Job and his visitors to teach us various important truths concerning life and its inevitable tribulations. Therefore, in our study of Job, we must be careful to recognize this fact.

Let us be serious in our attempts to understand, as much as possible, the full meaning of the *Book of Job*. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to guide us in our search for truth. Let us, to a deep yet reverential degree, question each other (respectfully) and God (reverentially) throughout this course. The subject of this course is extremely important to all of us, and baffling to so many. We need to share from our hearts, our doubts and fears concerning the question of why there is so much suffering in the world. Why do wicked people seem to prosper so often, apparently without divine retribution; yet, devout Christians at times suffer intense pain? It is a question whose apparent lack of an acceptable answer keeps many people at arm's length from their Creator God..... And for those of us who are Christians, a lack of an acceptable understanding of this topic, keeps us from being able to enjoy this life as much as we should (as much as God wants for his children). Why does God not tell us the answer? Or does He?

We will search the scriptures for the answers to dozens of life's perplexing questions over the few months of our study. The "wisdom books" of *Ecclesiastes* and *Proverbs* will be very helpful in understanding *Job*, and we will become familiar with them. Many other books of the Bible will help us on this quest as well.

During the last lecture, I will play a tape on *The Book of Job* by Dr. Dick Keyes that I first heard at a Christian study center outside of Boston, named L'Abri. The message on that tape was an incredible epiphany for me when I first listened to it. I believe that Dr. Keyes summed up very nicely the main message that I believe God wants us to learn from this great Old Testament book.

In a sense, I am going to be building this course to a climax of sorts. The last two weeks in particular, many of the more important questions will be answered by God Himself (through His Word in *Job*). However, it has been my experience, and I am sure the same for many of you, that God has a mysterious way of dealing with each one of His children in very unique ways and at different times. God may choose to speak to the heart and soul of any one of us at anytime as we pursue His truth concerning this very important subject. Let all of us be receptive to His promptings and ask Him to honor this study of His Word.

Keep an open mind..... and let God speak to you through the comments of others, His Word and His Holy Spirit.

We will be asking and answering many questions as we study this *Book of Job*. The following are some of the questions that are broached in this book:

The Problem of Pain

- Why does calamity strike down people (even ‘righteous’ people)?
- Does God care what happens to His creation?
- What are the limits of our knowledge?
- What should be the proper response to suffering?
- What is the proper response to our seemingly unanswered questions?
- Is Job a righteous man? What did he think about himself?
- Why did God create us?
- What are we supposed to accomplish in our lifetime on earth?

And, as we shall see, many more

The goal of this course is to allow each one of the participants to arrive at answers to these questions (and others like them) that achieve two goals: the answers are indeed correct (and not just “feel good”) *plus* they give us peace of mind and soul.

A few other questions to consider while reading this great book: Are you surprised that it is in the Bible? What do you think is the main reason God chose to include it in His Bible? Now, let us get started...

The Prologue of Job:

The Book of Job is considered by scholars to be a superb book of poetry – it is the first of the poetical books of the Old Testament (the others are: *Psalms*, *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes*, *Song of Solomon*, and *Lamentations*)

Many through history have acclaimed this book:

- Victor Hugo – “The *Book of Job* is perhaps the greatest masterpiece of the human mind.”
- Martin Luther called this book “magnificent and sublime”
- Thomas Caryl – “Call this book ... one of the grandest things ever written. There is nothing written, I think, of equal literary merit.”
- Alfred Lord Tennyson – “The greatest poem, whether of ancient or modern literature.”
- Job is the basis for the popular Archibald MacLeish play “J.B.”

The author of this book is unknown. Moses is one possibility. Other possible authors include Ezra, Job himself, Solomon, Elihu, etc.

Job is also mentioned in Ezekiel 14:14, 20 and James 5:11

Time Period – also not known for sure, but the content of the book suggests that it was written during the time of the Patriarchs. For example, references are made to the pyramids (Job 3:14).

Other reasons to date the time period to that time include:

- Job had a long life-span of approximately 200 years (this is consistent with the life-span of the patriarchs)

The Problem of Pain

- Job's wealth was determined by the number of livestock he possessed –consistent with how it was measured in the patriarchal period
- God was referred to as Shaddai thirty-one times in this book. This is a name for God often used by the patriarchs
- The name “Job” was a common name around 2,000 B.C.
- Job was the ‘high priest’ of his family
- Eliphaz was descended from Esau’s oldest son
- No mention of the Law, Moses, or any king of Israel is made – therefore, this book was almost certainly written before the Law of Moses was handed down by God

Many scholars believe that Uz was located northeast of the Sea of Galilee, toward the Euphrates River. Still others believe that it was located further south, somewhere in Edom or in that vicinity.

Chapters 1-2 are written in prose.

Job has his life turned “upside down”.

Satan’s challenge: Chapters 1&2

In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. **This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. He had seven sons and three daughters, and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East.** Job 1:1-3

Job loved and looked after his family. He would frequently sacrifice burnt offerings to God for his sons and daughters. Job, like all good fathers, wanted to protect his family in every way possible.

What does it mean when the Bible says Job was blameless? Is anyone blameless?

There is no one righteous, not even one. Romans 3:10

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23

Certainly Job had plenty of possessions. What were Job’s greatest possessions?

- Psalms 127:3-5 **Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them.**
- 1 Peter 5:10 **And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.**

The Problem of Pain

- 1 John 3:2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.
- John 14:2-3 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.
- Romans 8:19-23 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.
- Proverbs 17:6 Children's children are a crown to the aged, and parents are the pride of their children.

What can we do to protect our children? What are our limitations here?

- Eph. 6:4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.
- Prov. 22:6 Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.
- Prov. 22:15 Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.
- Romans 14:12 So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.
- Ezekiel 18:4 For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son--both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die.
- Ezekiel 18:14,17-22 But suppose this son has a son who sees all the sins his father commits, and though he sees them, he does not do such things... He withholds his hand from sin and takes no usury or excessive interest. He keeps my laws and follows my decrees." He will not die for his father's sin; he will surely live. But his father will die for his own sin. Yet you ask, 'Why does the son not share the guilt of his father?' Since the son has done what is just and right and has been careful to keep all my decrees, he will surely live. The soul who sins is the one who will die. "But if a wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die. None of the offenses he has committed will be remembered against him. Because of the righteous things he has done, he will live.

Heavenly scene: One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them. The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it." (Satan is the god of

The Problem of Pain

this world and prince of the “power of the air” from Eph 2:2) Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil." Job 1:6-8

It is fairly obvious in the 21st century that Satan does “rule” this world – he even offered Jesus kingdoms on this earth!

What does it mean that Satan is the god of this world? Is this biblical?

- **Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.** John 12:31
- **The prince of this world now stands condemned.** John 16:11
- The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 2 Cor 4:4
- As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. Eph 2:1-3

Obviously, God has allowed Satan this time on earth to wield his power and destructive force on the world, especially against the men and women in it. There are probably several reasons why this is true... but, there is no doubt that it is true.

What is the nature of Satan’s power?

- For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Eph 6:12
- Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith. 1 Peter 5:8-9

Can anything bad happen to us without God allowing it to happen?

- "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Rev 19:6-7
- For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to give the beast their power to rule, until God's words are fulfilled. Rev 17:17
- the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. 2 Thess 3:3
- No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. 1 Cor 10:13

Satan began a conversation with God. He told God that Job was only faithful to Him because of all of the good things in Job’s life.

"Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and

The Problem of Pain

herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face." Job 1:9-11

God certainly did not agree with this assessment and He desired to show Satan that Job (and, by extension, many other people in the world) would put their trust in Him because of *who He is*... not simply because of the things He provides. Then, God allowed Satan to take "things" away from Job – but never Job's life or mind!

First, God allowed Satan to do anything he wanted to do to Job, except cause him any physical harm. Satan caused virtually all of Job's possessions to be stolen or destroyed. More importantly, Satan caused all of Job's children to perish. Job was devastated. How did he respond?

"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised." In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing. Job 1:21-22

What do you think about this?

Is it reasonable to conceive of a person loving and worshipping God simply because He is God?

Why do you worship and love God?

What happens if things begin to go terribly wrong in your life?

Would you simply think or say something similar to what Job said above?

Recall what happened with Peter when the going got tough...

"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." But he replied, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death." Jesus answered, "I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me."

Luke 22:31-34

There are many reasons that Christians face difficult situations. One reason is noted in Hebrews. This was *not* the reason Job was facing his tragic problems.

"the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." Heb 12:6

As you think of other reasons that people face painful situations, keep in mind why we are on this earth. What are some of the reasons that we face difficult times? In your opinion, why are we on this earth?

- He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. Matt 5:45
- To offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship Romans 12:1
- It is God's will that you should be sanctified 1 Thess 4:3

The Problem of Pain

We are placed on this earth to find Jesus, to ask Him into our heart and lives, and then to spend the rest of our lives trying to become more like Him... working toward sanctification (we do not work toward salvation). We should definitely ask the Holy Spirit to help us in our pursuit toward personal sanctification. When we face the many varied situations that arise in life, some good, some bad, they all can be used by God to help us become more Christ-like.

- [And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. Romans 8:28-29](#)
- [always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Eph 5:20](#)

Some time later, God spoke to Satan to point out how well Job responded to his test. Satan was not impressed and he responded to God...

["Skin for skin!" Satan replied. "A man will give all he has for his own life. But stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face." Job 2:4-5](#)

[God then allowed Satan to come against Job himself... except for actually taking the life of this righteous man. Satan came against Job vehemently...and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head Job 2:7](#)

After Satan afflicted Job with these terribly painful sores, Job was unable to carry on any normal activities. His life had become one of constant pain and misery. What does Job's wife then say?

["Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God and die."](#)

What is Job's response to his wife?

["You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" Job 2:10](#)

How do you help your family members who are struggling with tragedy... and how do they help you?

[We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.](#)

[After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words. 1 Thess 4:14-18](#)

The Problem of Pain

After this, Job's "friends" come to visit.....

When Job's three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him.

When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him; they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads. **Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was.** Job 2:11-13

There is little doubt that simply sitting quietly with a person in anguish, letting him/her know that you care very much for their plight, is one of the better ways to comfort that individual. Many people try too hard to say meaningful words... when words often cannot help, and may even hurt. Job's friends did a nice service during these seven days, then they began to speak and the situation deteriorated quickly.

The Discussion Down at the Dump: Chapters 3-10

Eliphaz the Temanite: a great-grandson of Esau

Bildad the Shuhite: in the lineage of Abraham

Zophar the Naamathite: Naamah was in northern Arabia

All three had come to mourn with and comfort Job. Indeed, they did begin their visit in this manner as they were shocked at his situation. They sat with Job in silence for seven days before the talking began. That was the tradition in those times.

Job was the first to speak. Remember that God had allowed Satan to cause Job to:

- a) lose all of his material wealth
- b) lose all of his loved ones – his wife now is really a thorn in his side
- c) lose his health
- d) lose all emotional support
- e) cause Job to fall into deep depression and become suicidal
- f) cause Job to question God's justice and love

Can any of us identify with aspects of his predicament in any way?

The Problem of Pain

Job cries out that he wishes he had never been born, or if that had to happen, he wishes he had been still-born! If he has to go through what he is currently going through (which he does), with no end in sight, he wishes God had never brought him into being in the first place.

"Why did I not perish at birth, and die as I came from the womb?" Job 3:11

There is a similar wish noted in Job 10:18 when Job says...

"Why then did you bring me out of the womb? I wish I had died before any eye saw me." Job 10:18

Job then goes on to say...

"Why is light given to those in misery, and life to the bitter of soul, to those who long for death that does not come, who search for it more than for hidden treasure. Job 3:20-21

There are many other examples given in the Bible where people believe that it would be better to be dead given their current situation...

When Zimri saw that the city was taken, he went into the citadel of the royal palace and set the palace on fire around him. So he died, because of the sins he had committed, doing evil in the eyes of the LORD. 1 Kings 16:18-19

When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, "It would be better for me to die than to live." Jonah 4:8

So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the work into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless. So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun. For a man may do his work with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then he must leave all he owns to someone who has not worked for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune. What does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labors under the sun? All his days his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is meaningless. Eccl 2:17-23

Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep. 1 Kings 19:3-5

Do we ever feel that way? Is this type of thinking of any value?

How do you respond to difficult or tragic situations in your life?

What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me. I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil." Job 3:25-26

The Problem of Pain

Job told us that he feared something like this would happen when he was doing so well... and it did!

Do any of you ever worry about “tomorrow”? Is that a good idea?

We should plan for tomorrow, but let the results of those plans and actions lie in the hands of God.

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life ? Matt 6:25-27

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Phil 4:6-7

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Prov 3:5-6

Another disciple said to him, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." But Jesus told him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead." Matt 8:21-22

Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus 2 Tim 2:3

What can we do to stop worrying, as we know it is to our detriment and displeases God?

- Turn to God
Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God. My soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember you Psalms 42:5-6
- Seek the help of godly friends and family
- Study the Word
- Recognize just who God is and how much He loves you
- Use medicines, when necessary, and Christian Counseling
- Just keep going (or as a favorite poem of mine says... “just keep a’goin”)! Do not give up... ever!

Job does not ask any specific questions, but his friends have some advice. Sadly, it was not good advice and only resulted in making Job feel worse.

Introduction to their speeches:

What is the best way to help a friend or family member who is grieving?

What would you have done or said if you were there with Job?

The Problem of Pain

Eliphaz' first speech to Job: Chapter 4&5

The first friend to offer Job advice was Eliphaz. He was convinced, as many believed in those days, that anyone who was experiencing the misery that Job was dealing with at that time, had to have sinned against God. Therefore, God was obviously punishing Job.

Consider now: Who, being innocent, has ever perished? Where were the upright ever destroyed? As I have observed, those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap it. At the breath of God they are destroyed; at the blast of his anger they perish.

Job 4:7-9

Eliphaz went on to say that he had seen a vision that reminded him that God even reprimands His angels. Therefore, God certainly will punish mankind when they sin. For that reason, he then tells Job that if he were suffering like Job, he would confess his sins and beg forgiveness from God. According to this friend, God is impressed with those who do this. God is indeed pleased when He sees people repent and turn from their sins... asking for His forgiveness.

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives. 1 John 1:8-10

However, as we will see, Job does not believe that he deserves this punishment!
Further comments by Eliphaz follow...

“For hardship does not spring from the soil, nor does trouble sprout from the ground; Yet man is born to trouble, as surely as sparks fly upward. Job 5:6-7

"But if it were I, I would appeal to God; I would lay my cause before him. He performs wonders that cannot be fathomed, miracles that cannot be counted. He bestows rain on the earth; he sends water upon the countryside. The lowly he sets on high, and those who mourn are lifted to safety. He thwarts the plans of the crafty, so that their hands achieve no success.” Job 5:8-12

“Happy is the man whom God reproves! The Almighty’s chastening do not reject. For He wounds, but He binds up; He smites, but His hands give healing.” Job 5:17-18

Does Eliphaz know the reason for Job’s predicament?

Obviously not as he was not privy to the conversation between God and Satan in heaven. In this case, Job was not experiencing this painful life situation because of any sin in his life. Of course, Job had sinned at some point of his life. All have sinned at some point. Yet, God made it clear in the first chapter that Job’s sin was not the cause of his current problems.

What is the essence of what Eliphaz is saying to Job?

Is he correct? Should Job be happy as Eliphaz says?

The Problem of Pain

Is it true that tragic life situations are the result of sin? Is sin the only reason for these tragedies (i.e. do innocent people ever suffer)?

Let us take a look at a few Bible verses that reference the result of sin in one's life...

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:23

Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. James 1:15

Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever John 8:34-35

Are there other causes for tragedy befalling a person... or is Eliphaz correct?

He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous Matt 5:45

When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other. Eccl 7:14

Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. Jesus answered, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them--do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! Luke 13:1-5

As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. John 9:1-3

However, there are times that God does discipline his children...

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Heb 12:7-8

I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand [generations] of those who love me and keep my commandments. Deut 5:9-10

No one can ever know for sure why they are facing difficult situations, in my opinion. There are so many reasons God's children may be going through difficult times. Are they being punished? Are they being taught some valuable lesson in life? Is there a greater good that they are serving that is only known to God in His heaven? Is it simply because of the sins of another? As was detailed in an earlier section of this treatise, there are even other possible reasons why people suffer. One thing is for sure, there are certainly more reasons than sin in the life of a person that can result in painful life situations. We just simply cannot know what God is

The Problem of Pain

thinking as He sits up in heaven working out His pleasure for His creation. The *Book of Job* demonstrates this fact wonderfully.

Job then answered Eliphaz: Chapter 6

He certainly did not agree with his friend's advice. Job also was convinced that God was the cause of *his* pain... in a real sense, he was correct in that thought. However, he could not understand why he was now being subjected to this misery.

“For the arrows of the Almighty pierce me, and my spirit drinks in their poison; the terrors of God are arrayed against me.” Job 6:4

“Oh, that I might have my request, that God would grant what I hope for, that God would be willing to crush me, to let loose his hand and cut me off! Then I would still have this consolation-- my joy in unrelenting pain-- that I had not denied the words of the Holy One.” Job 6:8-10

Job prayed for God to allow him to perish so that he could escape his horrible pain. In fact, Job hoped that this would soon happen as he had so far been faithful to God... but his suffering was making him wonder just how long he could keep this up. He wasn't made of steel!

”Do I have the strength of stones, or is my flesh bronze?” Job 6:12

He also was very upset with his friends and their attitudes. We have already seen Eliphaz' comment. The two others were not going to be much different...

“A friend owes kindness to one in despair, though he have forsaken the fear of the Almighty.” Job 6:14

Job challenges them to prove him wrong...

“It is thus that you have now become for me; you see a terrifying thing and are afraid.” Job 6:21

“Teach me, and I will be silent; prove to me where I have erred.” Job 6:24

“.....Think it over; I still am right.” Job 6:29b

Job next turns his attention upward to God: Chapter 7

“Is not man's life on earth a drudgery? Job 7:1a

“My flesh is clothed with worms and scabs; my skin cracks and festers; my days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle; they come to an end without hope.” Job 7:5-6

“..... so he who goes down to the nether world shall come up no more. He shall not again return to his house; his place shall know him no more.” Job 7:9b-10

The Problem of Pain

“.....Why have you set me up as an object of attack?” Job 7:12b

I despise my life; I would not live forever. Let me alone; my days have no meaning. "What is man that you make so much of him, that you give him so much attention, that you examine him every morning and test him every moment? Will you never look away from me, or let me alone even for an instant? If I have sinned, what have I done to you, O watcher of men? Why have you made me your target? Job 7:16-20

Have I become a burden to you? Why do you not pardon my offenses and forgive my sins?
Job 7:20-21

What does Job think about Eliphaz' advice?

What does Job ask God? (there are a few things)

Where does Job say he will soon be? What does he think that place is like?

What positive thoughts or actions, if any, is Job thinking/taking to help his situation?

Bildad's first speech: Chapter 8

Keep in mind the following questions while reading chapter 8:

Where does Bildad derive his answers for Job's problem? Is that a good source?

For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: "He catches the wise in their craftiness"; and again, "The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile."

1 Cor 3:19-20

The LORD knows the thoughts of man; he knows that they are futile. Psalms 94:11

Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

James 3:15-16

As you read the words of Bildad, keep these questions in mind...

What does Bildad believe about God's justice?

What does Bildad tell Job he needs to do to get out of his terrible predicament?

Is he right? If Job strictly follows his advice (and does no more, yet no less), what do you think the result would be?

Then Bildad the Shuhite replied:

“How long will you utter such things? The words from your mouth are like a mighty wind!”

Job 8:1-2

Does God pervert justice? Does the Almighty pervert what is right? Job 8:3

But if you will look to God and plead with the Almighty, if you are pure and upright, even now he will rouse himself on your behalf and restore you to your rightful place. Job 8:5-6

Bildad began his discourse with Job by insulting him! Then he continued by reminding Job that if Job had not committed sins deserving of his current predicament, then God must be a

The Problem of Pain

distorter of justice. Since that could not be the case, Bildad suggests strongly that Job reconsider his stance.

Bildad appealed to the *wisdom of the ages* to suggest that if Job would simply repent, God would restore to him to his former prosperity and health. He also noted that anyone who placed their confidence in anyone or anything other than God might flourish for a season, but eventually “surely its life withers away” Job 8:19a

"Ask the former generations and find out what their fathers learned, for we were born only yesterday and know nothing, and our days on earth are but a shadow. Will they not instruct you and tell you? Will they not bring forth words from their understanding?" Job 8:8-10

Bildad continued his speech and told Job that anyone who “forget God” would have no hope. Such is the destiny of all who forget God; so perishes the hope of the godless. Job 8:13

However, Bildad noted ... "Surely God does not reject a blameless man or strengthen the hands of evildoers. He will yet fill your mouth with laughter and your lips with shouts of joy.

Job 8:20-21

In other words, Bildad is saying, if Job is as blameless as he claims, God certainly would not be putting him through all of this misery.

Both Eliphaz and Bildad are convinced that Job had to have sinned against God to receive the terrible downturn in life that he was facing. Yet, they also believe that if Job would only repent of those sins, God would forgive him and allow him to regain his previous good health and stature. Job continued to be very frustrated by his condition and even further by his “friends” abortive attempts to help him.

Job’s next response: Chapter 9

But how can a mortal be righteous before God? Though one wished to dispute with him, he could not answer him one time out of a thousand. His wisdom is profound, his power is vast. Who has resisted him and come out unscathed? Job 9:2-4

Job then went on to list many examples of God’s infinite power. Given God’s great power, Job concluded with...

"How then can I dispute with him? How can I find words to argue with him? Though I were innocent, I could not answer him; I could only plead with my Judge for mercy." Job 9:14-15

Job’s frustration continues as he is convinced that he has no way of successfully taking his case to God.

Even if I summoned him and he responded, I do not believe he would give me a hearing. He would crush me with a storm and multiply my wounds for no reason. Job 9:16-17

The Problem of Pain

Job still was certain that he had done nothing to deserve his current apparent punishment, yet there he was, in emotional and physical agony. Given what he was going through himself, Job felt that God “destroyed” both the righteous and the wicked with equal vigor. Job hated his life...

Although I am blameless, I have no concern for myself; I despise my own life. It is all the same; that is why I say, 'He destroys both the blameless and the wicked. Job 9:21-22

"He is not a man like me that I might answer him, that we might confront each other in court. **If only there were someone to arbitrate between us, to lay his hand upon us both, someone to remove God's rod from me, so that his terror would frighten me no more. Then I would speak up without fear of him, but as it now stands with me, I cannot.**" Job 9:32-35

This is the first time that a significant allusion to Jesus is made in this book. Job feels that his only hope would be to have some mediator with the necessary power and righteousness to intervene in his behalf in his court case with the God of the universe. Well, it turns out that we have a wonderful and powerful Mediator, supplied by God Himself and who is God Himself... Jesus Christ!

Job continues with his diatribe: Chapter 10

Job is so sick of his life and anxious for it to end at this point, he doesn't care how he approaches God.

"I loathe my very life; therefore I will give free rein to my complaint and speak out in the bitterness of my soul. Job 10:1

For these reasons, he becomes quite angry with God and is not respectful when he speaks to Him...

I will say to God: Do not condemn me, but tell me what charges you have against me. Does it please you to oppress me, to spurn the work of your hands, while you smile on the schemes of the wicked? Do you have eyes of flesh? Do you see as a mortal sees? Are your days like those of a mortal or your years like those of a man, that you must search out my faults and probe after my sin-- though you know that I am not guilty and that no one can rescue me from your hand? Job 10:2-7

"Your hands shaped me and made me. Will you now turn and destroy me? Remember that you molded me like clay. Will you now turn me to dust again? Job 10:8-9

You gave me life and showed me kindness, and in your providence watched over my spirit. "But this is what you concealed in your heart, and I know that this was in your mind: If I sinned, you would be watching me and would not let my offense go unpunished. If I am guilty--woe to

The Problem of Pain

me! Even if I am innocent, I cannot lift my head, for I am full of shame and drowned in my affliction. Job 10:12-15

Why then did You bring me forth from the womb? If only I had never come into being, or had been carried straight from the womb to the grave! Job 10:18-19

How does Job feel about his chances of successfully arguing with God?

Yet, Job wants God to know certain things; what are those things?

What does Job think about God's justice? Is God fair to his creation or does He just use His power arbitrarily and at His own whim? What does it mean that God is sovereign?

Job has lost all hope. He is in a deep depression. He asks God for one last favor...
Are not my few days almost over? Turn away from me so I can have a moment's joy before I go to the place of no return, to the land of gloom and deep shadow, to the land of deepest night...
Job 10:20-22

Have you ever felt this way? How can people best deal with these feelings?

Bildad and Eliphaz have suggested that Job ask God for mercy. What does Job think about this? What should we remember when we are feeling depressed and rejected by God? Does God remember His creation... does He love His children?

May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word. 2 Thess 2:16-17

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

Titus 3:3-7

Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this:

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Romans 5:6-10

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16

The LORD works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed. Psalms 103:6

The Problem of Pain

How has Job's relationship with God changed in the last few weeks? What effect is this having? How have difficult circumstances in your life changed your relationship with God? Did God appear to be absent from you then?

God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." Heb 13:5

What did you say to God at those times? Maybe those times are now.....

Did you ever get to the point where you longed for death?

Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep. 1 Kings 19:3-5

If you could have died, what would that have accomplished? How would that have affected those you love... including Jesus?

What brought you out of your most difficult life situation? What did you learn from that time in your life about yourself? About God?

How do you interpret the following verses?

It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, because a sad face is good for the heart. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure. It is better to heed a wise man's rebuke than to listen to the song of fools. Eccl 7:2-5

Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools. Do not say, "Why were the old days better than these?" For it is not wise to ask such questions. Eccl 7:9-10

What things must Job recognize before he can solve his problem(s)? What is God trying to teach him?

1. Accept what is happening to him
2. He will learn (later) why he should accept this
3. Bury his pride!
4. Repent

The Problem of Pain

Zophar's advice and Job's continued response to his friends Chapter 11-14

“Shall your babblings keep men silent, and shall you deride and no one give rebuke?” (Job 11:3)
"Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty? They are higher than the heavens--what can you do? They are deeper than the depths of the grave --what can you know? Job 11:7-8

Zophar suggests Job stop and think about exactly who he is questioning (God). There are many places in the Bible where we learn of the omnipotence and omniscience of God. Given this, how can man reasonably question God? That is what Zophar is saying to Job.

Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few. Eccl 5:2

No man can contend with one who is stronger than he. The more the words, the less the meaning, and how does that profit anyone? Eccl 6:10-11

“Can you penetrate the designs of God? Dare you vie with the perfection of the Almighty? It is higher than the heavens; what can you do?” Job 11:7-8

“For He knows the worthlessness of men and sees iniquity; will he then ignore it?” Job 11:11

Well, can we penetrate the designs of God?

Your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power. We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" -- but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. 1 Cor 2:5-10

When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to observe man's labor on earth--his eyes not seeing sleep day or night-- then I saw all that God has done. No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all his efforts to search it out, man cannot discover its meaning. Even if a wise man claims he knows, he cannot really comprehend it. Eccl 8:16-17

Zophar, convinced that Job is hiding some terrible secret sin(s), tells him how to get God to forgive him and then bring him out of his current misery...

if you devote your heart to him and stretch out your hands to him, if you put away the sin that is in your hand and allow no evil to dwell in your tent, then you will lift up your face without shame; you will stand firm and without fear. You will surely forget your trouble, recalling it only as waters gone by. Life will be brighter than noonday. Job 11:13-17

The Problem of Pain

H.L. Wilmington (Liberty Bible University) says that Zophar bases his advice on “pure dogmatism”. (Wilmington’s Guide to the Bible, p.59)

Should Job follow the advice of Zophar?

Could Job do what Zophar suggested? If so, what would happen if he did?

In chapter 12, Job responds with a wisecrack or two...

“No doubt you are the people and wisdom shall die with you.” Job 12:1-2

“but I have intelligence as well as you...” Job 12:3a

What does Job think of his friends’ words of advice?

Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him. Prov 26:12

Job next tells how he believes others view him and his miserable life. He also elaborates on his new found opinion that God seems to capriciously build up certain people only to bring them down later – for no apparent reason. Job cannot seem to find any logical reason for how God rules the universe... at least as it relates to allowing good things or bad things into the lives of people.

I have become a laughingstock to my friends, though I called upon God and he answered-- a mere laughingstock, though righteous and blameless! Men at ease have contempt for misfortune as the fate of those whose feet are slipping. The tents of marauders are undisturbed, and those who provoke God are secure-- those who carry their god in their hands. Job 12:4-6

So with old age is wisdom, and with length of days is understanding. Job 12:12

He sends counselors away barefoot, and of judges He makes fools. Job 12:17

He makes nations great and He destroys them; he spreads people abroad and He abandons them. Job 12:23

How does Job view his current situation?

I have seen another evil under the sun, and it weighs heavily on men: God gives a man wealth, possessions and honor, so that he lacks nothing his heart desires, but God does not enable him to enjoy them, and a stranger enjoys them instead. This is meaningless, a grievous evil. A man may have a hundred children and live many years; yet no matter how long he lives, if he cannot enjoy his prosperity and does not receive proper burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he.

It comes without meaning, it departs in darkness, and in darkness its name is shrouded. Though it never saw the sun or knew anything, it has more rest than does that man. Eccl 6:1-5

How is Job saying that God rules His creation?

I have seen something else under the sun:

The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all.

Moreover, no man knows when his hour will come:

The Problem of Pain

As fish are caught in a cruel net, or birds are taken in a snare, so men are trapped by evil times that fall unexpectedly upon them. Eccl 9:11-12

Since no man knows the future, who can tell him what is to come? No man has power over the wind to contain it. Eccl 8:7-8

Job wants an audience with God: Chapter 13

Job is still convinced that he is not deserving of his current predicament and is desperately asking for an audience before God. He wants to defend himself before the Almighty God of the universe. He is ready to let the “chips fall where they may” ... he simply wants to vent his frustration, defend himself, and hear from God. Job is totally baffled at the silence of God.

Surely I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to reason with God. Job 13:3

"Keep silent and let me speak; then let come to me what may. Why do I put myself in jeopardy and take my life in my hands? **Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him;** I will surely defend my ways to his face. Indeed, this will turn out for my deliverance, for no godless man would dare come before him! Job 13:13-16

Can anyone bring charges against me? If so, I will be silent and die. "Only grant me these two things, O God, and then I will not hide from you: Withdraw your hand far from me, and stop frightening me with your terrors. Then summon me and I will answer, or let me speak, and you reply. *How many wrongs and sins have I committed? Show me my offense and my sin.* Why do you hide your face and consider me your enemy? Job 13:19-24

Job recognizes that he may not be so perfect (for the first time in this discussion). Of course, all men sin and are without excuse before God. However, he still is desperate for an audience with the Almighty.

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

1 John 1:8

Consider the times that you have prayed fervently that God would only speak to you and tell you why certain things were happening.

Have you ever been in a similar position as Job now finds himself? That is, you are suffering terribly for no particularly obvious reason, and God seems to be silent to all your requests.

Job continues his lament: Chapter 14

"Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He springs up like a flower and withers away; like a fleeting shadow, he does not endure. Do you fix your eye on such a one? Will you bring him before you for judgment? Who can bring what is pure from the impure? No one! Man's days are determined; you have decreed the number of his months and have set limits

The Problem of Pain

he cannot exceed. So look away from him and let him alone, till he has put in his time like a hired man.” Job 14:1-6

“For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch will not cease. but man dieth, and wasteth away, yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?” Job 14: 7&10

Job paints a bleak view of life on earth for humanity. Maybe a tree or plant can grow again after being cut down... but, Job has questions about the ultimate fate of mankind. Job, like the “Preacher” in Ecclesiastes, despaired of living... Like most people who are facing a painful death, Job’s feelings change from despair to hope and back again. At times, he suggests that he is about to face ultimate extinction. Yet, in those times of hope, he sees himself surviving his present hideous troubles to live again in a life after death. We always must remember that God had not given the people of this time the same knowledge of Heaven that we are privy to in the modern world.

Here are some of the views on life spoken by the “The Preacher” of *Ecclesiastes*...

Again I looked and saw all the oppression that was taking place under the sun:

I saw the tears of the oppressed-- and they have no comforter; power was on the side of their oppressors-- and they have no comforter. And I declared that the dead, who had already died, are happier than the living, who are still alive. But better than both is he who has not yet been, who has not seen the evil that is done under the sun. Eccl 4:1-3

Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.

Eccl 2:11

For the wise man, like the fool, will not be long remembered; in days to come both will be forgotten. Like the fool, the wise man too must die!

So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. Eccl 2:16-17

It is important to give the final answer to the meaning of life by the writer of this incredible “wisdom book”, Ecclesiastes...

Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: **Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole [duty] of man.** For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil. Eccl 12:13-14

What does this mean to you? How does this relate to Job’s situation? Is this a good answer for people to live by?

Job wonders why God will not leave people alone so they could enjoy their lives, even if only for a little while. He then continues to ponder his ultimate fate...

“If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my renewal come. You will call and I will answer you; you will long for the creature your hands

The Problem of Pain

have made. Surely then you will count my steps but not keep track of my sin. My offenses will be sealed up in a bag; you will cover over my sin. Job 14:14-17

Here we see Job is expressing hope that God will forgive him his sin and someday, after his time here on earth, will restore him to life. Quickly, his melancholy attitude returns, however...

"But as a mountain erodes and crumbles and as a rock is moved from its place, as water wears away stones and torrents wash away the soil, so you destroy man's hope. You overpower him once for all, and he is gone; you change his countenance and send him away. If his sons are honored, he does not know it; if they are brought low, he does not see it. He feels but the pain of his own body and mourns only for himself." Job 14:18-22

So as the first round of talks comes to a close, Job is in a very despondent mood. But, as we shall see in just a little while, Job does indeed wax and wane in his belief concerning what is to come after his life here on earth...as Job answers this question a few chapters later...

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

So Job waivers between total despair and the hope that he may soon die and find himself alive and well in a place normally referred to as Paradise or Abraham's bosom (this is one section of Sheol).

What is Sheol? Remember, as I have just noted above, folks in Job's time did not have the revelation knowledge that we have today. Let me take a moment to mention where the Old Testament references Hades (Sheol).

Sheol: "My son will not go down there with you; his brother is dead and he is the only one left. If harm comes to him on the journey you are taking, you will bring my gray head down to the grave (Sheol) in sorrow." Gen 42:38

If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths (Sheol), you are there. Psalms 139:8

"I will ransom them from the power of the grave (Sheol); I will redeem them from death. Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave (Sheol), is your destruction?" Hosea 13:14

The grave (Sheol) below is all astir to meet you at your coming; it rouses the spirits of the departed to greet you-- all those who were leaders in the world. Isaiah 14:9

This term is of comparatively rare occurrence in the Greek New Testament. Our Lord speaks of Capernaum as being "brought down to hell" (Hades), i.e., simply to the lowest debasement, [**And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths (Hades).**] Matt 11:23

It is contemplated as a kind of kingdom which could never overturn the foundation of Christ's kingdom (**And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.** Matt 16:18)

The Problem of Pain

i.e., Christ's church can never die. In Luke 16:23, it is most distinctly associated with the doom and misery of the lost.

In hell (Hades), where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.' "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.' Luke 16:23-26

Sheol occurs in the Old Testament sixty-five times. The word *Sheol* is derived from a root-word meaning "to ask," "demand;" hence insatiableness (Prov. 30:15, 16). It is rendered "grave" thirty-one times (Gen. 37:35; 42:38; 44:29, 31; 1 Sam. 2:6, etc.). In thirty-one cases in the Authorized Version this word is rendered "hell," the place of disembodied spirits.

The inhabitants of *Sheol* are "the congregation of the dead" (Prov. 21:16). It is the abode of the wicked (Num. 16:33; Job 24:19; Ps. 9:17; 31:17, etc.) *and* of the good (Ps. 16:10; 30:3; 49:15; 86:13, etc.).

Sheol is described as deep (Job 11:8), dark (10:21, 22), with bars (17:16). The dead "go down" to it (Num. 16:30, 33; Ezek. 31:15, 16, 17). The Greek word *Hades* of the New Testament has the same scope of significance as *Sheol* of the Old Testament. It is a prison (1 Pet. 3:19), with gates and bars and locks (Matt. 16:18; Rev. 1:18), and it is downward (Matt. 11:23; Luke 10:15). **The righteous and the wicked are separated.** The blessed dead are in that part of *Hades* called **paradise** (Luke 23:43). They are also said to be in **Abraham's bosom** (Luke 16:22). **Gehenna** designates **the place of the lost** (Matt. 23:33). The fearful nature of the condition there is described in various figurative expressions (Matt. 8:12; 13:42; 22:13; 25:30; Luke 16:24, etc.).

How did God deal with those who died in Old Testament times? Do you believe that they went directly to Heaven? Had the penalty for their sins been paid?

and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

Eccl 12:7

When calamity comes, the wicked are brought down, but even in death the righteous have a refuge. Prov 14:32

Consider the blameless, observe the upright; there is a future for the man of peace. But all sinners will be destroyed; the future of the wicked will be cut off. The salvation of the righteous comes from the LORD; he is their stronghold in time of trouble. The LORD helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him. Psalms 37:37-40

The Problem of Pain

How do Job's words reflect this... if they do?

How does Job's view of his afterlife prospects affect his view of his suffering?

Apparently, God left Heaven somewhat of a "mystery" in Old Testament times.

How does your belief in Heaven affect your attitude toward life and the inherent suffering found throughout one's lifetime?

The Second Round of Talks

Chapters: 15-21

Eliphaz proceeds: Chapter 15

As the discussion proceeds, the friends become more and more belligerent in their words and tone. They are frustrated that Job does not do what is so obviously needed, in their opinion – repent of his sins and ask God for forgiveness.

But you even undermine piety and hinder devotion to God. Your sin prompts your mouth; you adopt the tongue of the crafty. Your own mouth condemns you, not mine; your own lips testify against you. Job 15:4-6

Eliphaz suggests that Job is sinning in the manner of his response to his situation. What do you think? Is Job being blasphemous?

Blasphemy = defined as "the act of expressing lack of reverence for God" or "to speak reproachfully of God"

He next tells Job, in a sarcastic manner, that he (i.e. Job) doesn't know what he is talking about as he complains about his current situation...

"Are you the first man ever born? Were you brought forth before the hills? Do you listen in on God's council? Do you limit wisdom to yourself? What do you know that we do not know? What insights do you have that we do not have? The gray-haired and the aged are on our side, men even older than your father. Are God's consolations not enough for you, words spoken gently to you?" Job 15:7-11

Eliphaz wants Job to remember that what he is being told is coming from older men that possess much more wisdom than Job. Job should listen and learn and then take their advice. Otherwise, he certainly would be doomed to continue in his sufferings.

"Listen to me and I will explain to you; let me tell you what I have seen." Job 15:17

Eliphaz is then about to explain to Job what he believes is in store for all sinful men and woman, which certainly must include Job...

The Problem of Pain

All his days the wicked man suffers torment, the ruthless through all the years stored up for him. Terrifying sounds fill his ears; Job 15:20-21

Distress and anguish fill him with terror; they overwhelm him, like a king poised to attack, because he shakes his fist at God and vaunts himself against the Almighty. Job 15:24-25

He will no longer be rich and his wealth will not endure, nor will his possessions spread over the land. He will not escape the darkness; a flame will wither his shoots, and the breath of God's mouth will carry him away. Job 15:29-30

Before his time he will be paid in full, and his branches will not flourish. Job 15:32

What is Eliphaz implying concerning Job?

Is this what actually does happen to evil people in the world we live in?

How may this relate to the time in which he lived? What about 'grace' (the unmerited favor of God toward mankind)?

Job's replies: Chapter 16

Job wishes that his friends would just recognize that God is unjustly punishing him for misdeeds that he has not committed. They, of course, do not believe this to be a possibility and only see Job's predicament as being the inevitable result of his sin..... and only his sin.

Then Job replied:

"I have heard many things like these; miserable comforters are you all! Will your long-winded speeches never end? Job 16:1-3

I also could speak like you, if you were in my place; I could make fine speeches against you and shake my head at you. But my mouth would encourage you; comfort from my lips would bring you relief. Job 16:4-5

Here we see Job telling these other three men that he certainly would not treat them as he was being treated under the same circumstances. He would comfort them, not denigrate them.

God has turned me over to evil men and thrown me into the clutches of the wicked. All was well with me, but he shattered me; he seized me by the neck and crushed me. He has made me his target; Job 16:11-12

My face is red with weeping, deep shadows ring my eyes; yet my hands have been free of violence and my prayer is pure. "O earth, do not cover my blood; may my cry never be laid to rest! **Even now my witness is in heaven; my advocate is on high. My intercessor is my friend as my eyes pour out tears to God; on behalf of a man he pleads with God as a man pleads for his friend.** "Only a few years will pass before I go on the journey of no return. Job 16:16-22

The Problem of Pain

These are intriguing verses as Job is asking that his blood not be covered after his death so that it will be a sign to Heaven that he requires vindication. Job then is calls for his Heavenly advocate to argue his case for him. Now, who might that be?

Job continues with his words of despair: Chapter 17

"Give me, O God, the pledge you demand. Who else will put up security for me? Job 17:3

This is an interesting verse as Job calls out to God to put up bond for him as no one else would do it. In this and other verses in *The Book of Job*, there at times is a sense that God is not only the judge but also the advocate (or defense attorney) for Job. We also saw this in Chapter 16 and we will see it elsewhere as well. Of course, this is very consistent with our concept of the Trinity and knowing that Jesus is our advocate as He sits at the right hand of His Father.

"God has made me a byword to everyone, a man in whose face people spit. My eyes have grown dim with grief; my whole frame is but a shadow. Job 17:6-7

Nevertheless, the righteous will hold to their ways, and those with clean hands will grow stronger. "But come on, all of you, try again! I will not find a wise man among you. My days have passed, my plans are shattered, and so are the desires of my heart. These men turn night into day; in the face of darkness they say, 'Light is near.' If the only home I hope for is the grave... Job 17:9-13

Where then is my hope? Who can see any hope for me? Will it go down to the gates of death? Will we descend together into the dust?" Job 17:15-16

Bildad's Second Response: Chapter 18

Then Bildad the Shuhite replied:

"When will you end these speeches? Be sensible, and then we can talk. Why are we regarded as cattle and considered stupid in your sight?" Job 18:1-3

"The lamp of the wicked is snuffed out." Job 18:5

The vigor of his step is weakened; his own schemes throw him down. Job 18:7

He is driven from light into darkness and is banished from the world. He has no offspring or descendants among his people, no survivor where once he lived. Surely such is the dwelling of an evil man; such is the place of one who knows not God." Job 18:18-19,21

Bildad spends virtually all of this time pointing out to Job what he believes will be the result of his unrepentant sin. He goes on giving example after example of how terrible is the plight of the sinner, "one who knows not God".

So Eliphaz and Bildad continue to point out that a just God simply would not allow for the suffering that Job was undergoing unless Job was really NOT who he says he is – that is, Job

The Problem of Pain

must be unrighteous and worthy of his painful situation. Job, of course, is unrelenting in his belief that this is all a big ‘error’ on God’s part... he is not worthy of this treatment.

Who is right? Why? How does your faith depend on this answer, or does it?

What do you think God wants us to be getting out of this book *up to this point*?

If Job is right (that is, God allows the wicked to prosper and the just to suffer), what does this say about God? Elaborate on this point concerning the suffering/prospering of people. That is, when do people prosper..... When do they suffer?

The result of living a righteous or wicked life...

The wicked man earns deceptive wages, but he who sows righteousness reaps a sure reward.

Prov 11:18

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. Heb 11:6

"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. Rev 22:12

Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Matt 13:43

Wicked men are overthrown and are no more, but the house of the righteous stands firm.

Prov 12:7

When calamity comes, the wicked are brought down, but **even in death the righteous have a refuge.** Prov 14:32

Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. 2 Tim 4:14

You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. Psalms 91:8

The LORD preserves the faithful, but the proud he pays back in full. Psalms 31:23

Are there any clues in the verses above as to where and when God will punish the unrighteous and reward the righteous?

Job responds to Bildad’s diatribe against him: Chapter 19

Then Job replied:

"How long will you torment me and crush me with words? Ten times now you have reproached me; shamelessly you attack me. If it is true that I have gone astray, my error remains my concern alone. If indeed you would exalt yourselves above me and use my humiliation against me, then know that God has wronged me and drawn his net around me. Job 19:1-6

Job once again tells his friends how much their terrible words trouble him. He also mentions that even if he has “gone astray”, they still do not need to treat him so shamelessly.

The Problem of Pain

Why could they not show him some pity and sympathy? Then he reminds them just how much God has destroyed him. God has given him no peace whatsoever...

“He hath stripped me of my glory, and taken me the crown from my head. He hath destroyed me on every side, and I am gone: and mine hope hath he removed like a tree.” Job 19:9-10

“He hath also kindled His wrath against me, and He counteth me unto Him as one of His enemies.” Job 19:11

Then Job mentions how everyone is against him, God, his wife, friends, brothers, little children, etc, etc.

“My bone cleaveth to my skin and to my flesh, and I am **escaped with the skin of my teeth.**” (Job 19:20)

“Have pity on me, my friends, have pity, for the hand of God has struck me. Why do you pursue me as God does?” Job 19:21-22

He also goes into some detail concerning his horrendous bodily condition. He is barely alive, he smells bad, his skin is disgusting, people can hardly bear to look at him and cannot bear to be near him. Then Job begins to speak some of the most glorious words in the Old Testament...

“Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll, that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever!”

Apparently, Job has something very, very important to say...

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; I myself will see him with my own eyes--I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me! Job 19:23-27

The word translated “Redeemer” here is used forty-four times in the Old Testament. It means “to lay claim to a person or thing; to free or deliver.” A redeemer in those days was a person who provided legal protection for a relative who could not do so for himself. He could redeem property, avenge a slain relative, marry his brother’s childless widow (as in the case of Ruth). A redeemer could buy a relative out of slavery.

Just who do you think Job is referring to when he says his Redeemer lives?

What is meant by the Redeemer standing on earth... in the end?

What do you think Job means when he says that he will see God in his flesh... after his skin is destroyed?

The Problem of Pain

So what has just happened? Job has been ranting on about how terribly he has been treated by God. Then, suddenly, he has a change of heart and begins this incredible statement of faith. He believes that someday, when all is done, God (his Redeemer) will be there with him and stand up for him... finally.

In painful life situations, what are the thoughts that go through your mind? Is there sometimes a strange dichotomy – a battle of your faith (that which is unseen) against what you “see”?

What is faith? Where does it come from?

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- Eph 2:8

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Heb 11:1

So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Romans 10:17

What is the relationship between faith and pleasing God?

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. Heb 11:6

Next, Zophar and Job argue about the fate of the wicked and righteous:

Zophar’s second reply: Chapter 20

Zophar spends every verse in the twentieth chapter telling Job of the terrible plight of the wicked. Of course, he is telling Job this because he is convinced that Job is wicked and currently being punished while still living, while certain disaster awaits his death...

...the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment?

Job 20:5

He hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again: God shall cast them out of his belly. Job 20:15

God will vent his burning anger against him and rain down his blows upon him. Job 20:23

The heaven shall reveal his iniquities; and the earth shall rise up against him. The increase of his house shall depart, and his goods shall flow away in the day of his wrath. This is the portion of the wicked man from God and the heritage appointed him by God. Job 20:27-29

Is Zophar correct in what he says concerning the plight of the wicked?

Job answers to end the second round of talks: Chapter 21

"Listen carefully to my words; let this be the consolation you give me. Bear with me while I speak, and after I have spoken, mock on." Job 21:2-3

The Problem of Pain

Job asks that his “friends” listen to him for just a moment... then they can continue to mock him at will...

Why do the wicked live on, growing old and increasing in power? They see their children established around them, their offspring before their eyes. Their homes are safe and free from fear; the rod of God is not upon them. Job 21:7-9

Job is convinced that the basic premise of Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar is simply wrong. They are only saying those things that they have been told are true or those things that they believe should be true - given that God is a just God. They are dogmatic when they say that if a bad thing happens to a person, that person must have deserved it! God would not allow otherwise, they believe. They also believe the opposite is true. Job is asking them to take a look at the facts of real life! It does not happen that way! Just as Zophar spent virtually all of his last harangue against Job pointing out to him how much the wicked suffer, Job is now about to spend almost this entire chapter repudiating this idea.

Just who do you say is correct on this issue? What do you think about this?

The Psalmist agreed with Job when he wrote about the life of the wicked... vs. the life of the pure at heart...

They say, "How can God know? Does the Most High have knowledge?" This is what the wicked are like-- always carefree, they increase in wealth. Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence. All day long I have been plagued; I have been punished every morning. Psalms 73:11-14

Yet they say to God, 'Leave us alone! We have no desire to know your ways. Who is the Almighty, that we should serve him? What would we gain by praying to him?' Job 21:14-15 [It is said,] 'God stores up a man's punishment for his sons.' Let him repay the man himself, so that he will know it! Let his own eyes see his destruction; let him drink of the wrath of the Almighty. For what does he care about the family he leaves behind when his allotted months come to an end? Job 21:19-21

Job says that God sometimes seems to save his wrath for the evil-doer's children (and Zophar and Eliphaz agree). But, Job strongly suggests that it would be much better if God let the wicked person see his own destruction and drink of the wrath of the Almighty himself!

What do you think about children suffering for their parents' sins?

Or the other way around? Does it happen? Does God play a role in this situation?

You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand [generations] of those who love me and keep my commandments. Ex 20:5-6

The Problem of Pain

For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son--both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die. Ezek 18:4

How can you reconcile the above two verses?

"I know full well what you are thinking, the schemes by which you would wrong me. You say, 'Where now is the great man's house, the tents where wicked men lived?' Have you never questioned those who travel? Have you paid no regard to their accounts-- Job 21:27-29

Finally, Job points out that if those three men (his so-called friends) would only listen to the accounts of other observers of the world... and get the facts straight... they would know what Job is saying is correct. Sometimes the wicked man reaps many great financial and material rewards in this life on earth... and even dies while still wealthy and comfortable! Job is upset that this is true.

"One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet. His breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow. And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure. They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them." Job 21:23-26

Job points out that it seems that the wicked sometimes prosper all through life while the righteous suffer; then both end up in the same place. So, he asks, what is the point?

What is God doing? What do you say? Is this fair?

What advantages do you have in answering these questions that Job was missing?

But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death." Rev 21:8

Job completes his argument against his friends with...

"So how can you console me with your nonsense? Nothing is left of your answers but falsehood!" Job 21:34

What are your feelings about the wicked seeming to prosper? Does this bother you?

Isn't it true that the wicked do seem to skate by pretty nicely in their life on earth?

How about the fact that strong Christians often suffer terribly? Does this bother you? Note how Jeremiah and the Psalmist looked at this situation...

You are always righteous, O LORD, when I bring a case before you. Yet I would speak with you about your justice: Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the faithless live at ease? Jer 12:1

The Problem of Pain

My feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from the burdens common to man; they are not plagued by human ills. Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence. From their callous hearts comes iniquity; They say, "How can God know? Does the Most High have knowledge?" This is what the wicked are like-- always carefree, they increase in wealth. Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence. All day long I have been plagued; I have been punished every morning. If I had said, "I will speak thus," I would have betrayed your children. **When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny. Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin.** How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors! As a dream when one awakes, so when you arise, O Lord, you will despise them as fantasies. When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you. Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. Psalms 73:2-25

Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong; for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away. Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun. Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret-- it leads only to evil. **For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land. A little while, and the wicked will be no more; though you look for them, they will not be found. But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace.**

Psalms 37:1-11

So far, in the *Book of Job*, has God answered the primary question posed by this treatise? Why do "good people" suffer so much pain in this world we live in? The answer is, of course, no. In fact, God has yet to speak to Job at all. That situation will eventually be rectified... but not yet.

Do your religious beliefs require an orderly and logical world? Do you need to understand why God does what He does? Why or why not? How does your faith play a role in the answer to these questions?

Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.

Isaiah 40:28

The Problem of Pain

The Third Round of Talks Chapters 22-31

In this third round of discussions, Job's friends just get right to the point of tearing Job's position down..... they no longer try to be even the least bit subtle or civil in their attacks.

Eliphaz, once again, berates Job: Chapter 22

Eliphaz points out to Job that God is so complete in Himself, there is nothing that we can do for Him..... there are no needs that He needs met. Therefore, "Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? Or is it gain to Him, that thou makest thy ways perfect? Will He reprove thee for fear of thee? Will He enter with thee into judgment?" Job 22:3,4

Is there anything that God requires from us (humanity)?
Why do you think God created man?

Eliphaz then proceeds to list several horrendous sins that he says that Job is guilty of committing... all of which are lies.

Is not your wickedness great? Are not your sins endless? You demanded security from your brothers for no reason; you stripped men of their clothing, leaving them naked. You gave no water to the weary and you withheld food from the hungry, though you were a powerful man, owning land-- an honored man, living on it. And you sent widows away empty-handed and broke the strength of the fatherless. Job 22:5-9

Then he follows with his main overall theme... repent of your heinous sins and God will restore you.

"Submit to God and be at peace with him; in this way prosperity will come to you. Accept instruction from his mouth and lay up his words in your heart. If you return to the Almighty, you will be restored: If you remove wickedness far from your tent..." Job 22:21-23

"He will deliver even one who is not innocent, who will be delivered through the cleanness of your hands." Job 22:30

The three men that are speaking with Job are utterly convinced that Job had to be hiding very terrible sins. They had no other way to explain the terrible pain and suffering that he was now experiencing. People of that time believed that people were blessed or punished during their time here on earth based solely on their "works"... sinful or righteous. Since Job was suffering far worse than anyone else, he obviously must have sinned far worse than others. They were once again pleading with Job to repent so God would restore him to his previous state... or at least, relieve him of his current painful situation.

The Problem of Pain

The Bible tells us in many places that Christians will have to face trouble while in this world... trouble and pain that may often not directly relate to sin in a person's life. So far, God has not come onto the scene to tell Job (and us) just what He wants him to understand about this issue. However, God soon will speak to Job.

In the New Testament it does say...

In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." John 16:33

They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said. Acts 14:21-22

We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body.

....we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. 2 Cor 4:8-11,16-18

God is telling us in these three verses that we can expect trouble in this world.

What is the essence of the words of Jesus on this point? (from John 16:33)

Job begins his third round of replies: Chapter 23

Job once again addresses his baffling situation of not being able to face his accuser. He believes this is God, Himself. Job is convinced that he could win his case if only he could gain an audience with God.

If only I knew where to find him; if only I could go to his dwelling! I would state my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments. Job 23:3-4

Would he oppose me with great power? No, he would not press charges against me. There an upright man could present his case before him, and I would be delivered forever from my judge. Job 23:6-7

Job continues his speech to say that God is simply nowhere to be found. He does say that he will be found innocent when God finally gives him a chance to be heard... however, literally, God only knows when that will be!

But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold. My feet have closely followed his steps; I have kept to his way without turning aside. I have not departed

The Problem of Pain

from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread. Job 23:10-12

Is Job correct here? Will he come forth as 'gold' when tried?

The LORD detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished. Prov 16:5
for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins. Col 2:13

Although Job is convinced of his righteousness, and the fact that he will someday be "cleared" in a heavenly courtroom... he still is afraid of God. This is because of God's omnipotence as well as the terrible situation in which Job now finds himself... one which God apparently has brought on to Job. The utter lack of understanding as to why God has seen fit to allow Job to sink to such a miserable level, is almost too hard for Job to stand.

"But he stands alone, and who can oppose him? He does whatever he pleases. He carries out his decree against me, and many such plans he still has in store. That is why I am terrified before him; Job 23:13-15

Job is now afraid of God. Why? Do you ever become afraid of God? How is this different than *fearing* God as the Bible says we should? Below are several verses that mention the "fear of the Lord." This is a proper respect that God is due from people. We should not be *afraid* of God, however.

Now let the fear of the LORD be upon you. Judge carefully, for with the LORD our God there is no injustice or partiality or bribery. 2 Chron 19:7

"The fear of the Lord--that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding." Job 28:28

The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. Psalms 19:9

Fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing. Psalms 34:9

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. Psalms 111:10

To fear the LORD is to hate evil. Prov 8:13

He who fears the LORD has a secure fortress, and for his children it will be a refuge. The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, turning a man from the snares of death. Prov 14:26-27

Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for; through the fear of the LORD a man avoids evil. Prov 16:6

Humility and the fear of the LORD bring wealth and honor and life. Prov 22:4

The Problem of Pain

Chapter 24-28: A theological difference of opinion

The exact placement of the verses in these five chapters of the *Book of Job* have come under some scrutiny by theologians. Some believe that in the collating of these chapters and verses in ancient days, certain errors may have been made that resulted in some of the verses being attributed to the wrong person. Let me point out the sections in question:

- Chapter 24:18-24 Some attribute these words to Zophar (since he otherwise does not have a third speech) as they are similar in tone to his other known ideas on the fate of the wicked. Still others suggest that possibly simply the phrase (which would have been stated by Job) “You say” is missing to introduce these seven verses.
- Chapter 26-27 Several commentators believe that many of these verses have been re-arranged in ancient days by copiers of the original writer. That is, fragments may have been misplaced as these chapters were passed down. None believe that any of the suggested misplacement of these verses substantially alters the thrust of these chapters let alone the book as a whole. These critics suggest that Zophar or Bildad may have made some of the statements in these chapters.
- Chapter 28 John C. L. Gibson, who wrote the commentary, *Job*, believes that this chapter is an integral part of the original book, but that it was not spoken by Job. He believes that the Holy Spirit included this chapter to “serve a similar function as the ‘chorus’ of a Greek drama, offering comment from the outside on what is going on.”
- Having mentioned briefly the three opinions above, let me hasten to add that the vast majority of Bible commentators believe that these and all other verses in this great book were written exactly as the Holy Spirit planned and passed down without error. This is what I believe. It is true, however, that there is really no consequential difference in *The Book of Job* even if certain fragments in the chapters above were attributed to the persons suggested by those more liberal theologians.

Job continues his harangue against the apparent injustice of God: Chapter 24

Why does the Almighty not set times for judgment? Why must those who know him look in vain for such days? Job 24:1

The fatherless child is snatched from the breast; the infant of the poor is seized for a debt.

Job 24:9

The groans of the dying rise from the city, and the souls of the wounded cry out for help. But God charges no one with wrongdoing. "There are those who **rebel against the light**, who do not know its ways or stay in its paths. Job 24:12-13

It is an interesting way to state just how the wicked act... that is, they “rebel against the light.” Job then lists the many ways the wicked sin and thereby hurt innocents, yet they seem to at least do as well as the faithful (and many times seem to do better).

The Problem of Pain

When daylight is gone, the **murderer** rises up and kills the poor and needy; in the night he steals forth like a **thief**. The eye of the **adulterer** watches for dusk; he thinks, 'No eye will see me,' and he keeps his face concealed. In the dark, men break into houses, but by day they shut themselves in; **they want nothing to do with the light**. Job 24:14-16

Finally, Job seems to understand that God is concerned with more than just this present time on earth for his creation as he says...

the grave snatches away those who have sinned. Job 24:19
The womb shall forget him: the worm shall feed sweetly on him: he shall be not more remembered; and wickedness shall be broken as a tree. But God drags away the mighty by his power; though they become established, they have no assurance of life. He may let them rest in a feeling of security, but his eyes are on their ways. For a little while they are exalted, and then they are gone; they are brought low and gathered up like all others. Job 24:22-24

Although the wicked may seemingly escape from the wrath of God... eventually, Job finally seems to recognize, they are “**brought low**”. Sooner or later, everyone dies. Then it is up to God what happens next.

What does happen after death? What did the people in the Old Testament days think happened after death?

Bildad gives a very short reply: Chapter 25

"Dominion and awe belong to God; he establishes order in the heights of heaven. How then can a man be righteous before God? How can one born of woman be pure? If even the moon is not bright and the stars are not pure in his eyes, how much less man, who is but a maggot-- a son of man, who is only a worm!" Job 25:2,4-6

Bildad once again notes how great God is and how man dare not stand before God and argue with Him and claim to be righteous. Of course, he is speaking to Job and about Job when he says this. Bildad stops his comments after this very short third speech. He has had his say. If Job chooses not to listen, so be it. Bildad tried to get Job to repent and turn his life back over to God. Unfortunately, Bildad never did understand what Job was dealing with and he was unwilling to *really listen* to Job. He certainly was unwilling to comfort him. He had this pre-conceived notion about how things should work, and he did not let the facts get in the way of his dogmatic belief.

The Problem of Pain

Can you think of other beliefs that you or others may have that have never been put to the test? Are you afraid to have any of your beliefs challenged? If so, what are they? Why are you so concerned?

Job speaks of God's majesty: Chapter 26

Then Job replied:

"How you have helped the powerless! How you have saved the arm that is feeble! What advice you have offered to one without wisdom! And what great insight you have displayed! Who has helped you utter these words? And whose spirit spoke from your mouth?" Job 26:1-4

The opening verses (above) of chapter 26 have Job sarcastically telling Bildad how impressive he is. Immediately after this, Job presents God as the majestic Creator that He is:

He spreads out the northern [skies] over empty space; he suspends the earth over nothing. He wraps up the waters in his clouds, yet the clouds do not burst under their weight. He covers the face of the full moon, spreading his clouds over it. He marks out the horizon on the face of the waters for a boundary between light and darkness. The pillars of the heavens quake, aghast at his rebuke. By his power he churned up the sea; by his wisdom he cut Rahab to pieces. By his breath the skies became fair; his hand pierced the gliding serpent. Job 26:7-13

Job's last verse in this chapter recognizes that God has an even more amazing and impressive power, knowledge and intellect that is totally beyond our understanding...

"And these are but the outer fringe of his works; how faint the whisper we hear of him! Who then can understand the thunder of his power?" Job 26:14

What is Job beginning to understand about God... and himself?

"How great you are, O Sovereign LORD! There is no one like you, and there is no God but you." 2 Sam 7:22

Job continues to defend himself before his "friends" and God: Chapter 27

And Job continued his discourse:

"As surely as God lives, who has denied me justice, the Almighty, who has made me taste bitterness of soul, as long as I have life within me, the breath of God in my nostrils, my lips will not speak wickedness, and my tongue will utter no deceit. I will never admit you are in the right; till I die, I will not deny my integrity. I will maintain my righteousness and never let go of it; my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live... Job 27:1-6

The Problem of Pain

Job is certainly adamant that he will maintain his integrity until the end. He is still convinced that he is righteous before God. Job believes that it would be hypocritical of him to ask for God's forgiveness and mercy because he is not guilty.

Does he have a good point? If not, where is Job wrong?

For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul.
(Job 27:8)

Job next tells his listeners that he will remind them about God's nature. He also adds that they should already be aware of what he is saying. Primarily, Job spends the remainder of this chapter telling his listeners that God will indeed eventually judge the sinner, the wicked person. Job and his three "friends" all believe this fact... it is just that Job realizes the obvious fact that this judgment may not come until late in life and maybe not until after death. Also, Job has been striving desperately to convince these visitors that even good people may suffer terribly for no obvious reason... and that is what he states was happening to him!

"I will teach you about the power of God; the ways of the Almighty I will not conceal. You have all seen this yourselves. Why then this meaningless talk?" Job 27:11-12

"Here is the fate God allots to the wicked, the heritage a ruthless man receives from the Almighty: However many his children, their fate is the sword; his offspring will never have enough to eat. The plague will bury those who survive him, and their widows will not weep for them. Though he heaps up silver like dust and clothes like piles of clay, what he lays up the righteous will wear, and the innocent will divide his silver. The house he builds is like a moth's cocoon, like a hut made by a watchman. **He lies down wealthy, but will do so no more; when he opens his eyes, all is gone. Terrors overtake him like a flood**; a tempest snatches him away in the night. The east wind carries him off, and he is gone; it sweeps him out of his place."

Job 27:13-21

The Abilities of Man and the Wisdom of God: Chapter 28

Recall that this chapter is somewhat of a respite from the discourse between Job and his visitors. Here we see Job simply speaking of man's God-given abilities... which are very impressive. Yet, when one compares them with the wisdom of God, they pale in significance. "There is a mine for silver and a place where gold is refined. Iron is taken from the earth, and copper is smelted from ore. Man puts an end to the darkness; he searches the farthest recesses for ore in the blackest darkness. Far from where people dwell he cuts a shaft, in places forgotten by the foot of man; far from men he dangles and sways. The earth, from which food comes, is transformed below as by fire; sapphires come from its rocks, and its dust contains nuggets of gold. No bird of prey knows that hidden path, no falcon's eye has seen it. Proud beasts do not

The Problem of Pain

set foot on it, and no lion prowls there. Man's hand assaults the flinty rock and lays bare the roots of the mountains. He tunnels through the rock; his eyes see all its treasures.” Job 28:1-10

What is Job pointing out in the first ten verses of this chapter? What is he saying about man's capabilities?

But where can wisdom be found? Where does understanding dwell? Man does not comprehend its worth; it cannot be found in the land of the living. The deep says, 'It is not in me'; the sea says, 'It is not with me.' It cannot be bought with the finest gold. Job 28:12-15

What is Job saying here? What are man's limits? What is the point of this chapter? Can nature provide the answers to man's questions concerning the universe?

"Where then does wisdom come from? Where does understanding dwell? It is hidden from the eyes of every living thing, concealed even from the birds of the air. Destruction and Death say, 'Only a rumor of it has reached our ears.' God understands the way to it and he alone knows where it dwells, for he views the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens. When he established the force of the wind and measured out the waters, when he made a decree for the rain and a path for the thunderstorm, then he looked at wisdom and appraised it; he confirmed it and tested it. And he said to man, 'The fear of the Lord--that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.'" Job 28:20-28

What is wisdom? From whence does it come? How does man get wisdom?
For Christians, what things are better in youth And what things get better with age?
What do various cultures think about wisdom and age?

Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.
Prov 4:7

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” Prov 9:10

Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. 1 Cor 1:20-21

Job's "Good Old Days": Chapter 29

Job continued his discourse:

"How I long for the months gone by, for the days when God watched over me, when his lamp shone upon my head and by his light I walked through darkness! Oh, for the days when I was in

The Problem of Pain

my prime, when God's intimate friendship blessed my house, when the Almighty was still with me and my children were around me.” Job 29:1-5

When I went to the gate of the city and took my seat in the public square, the young men saw me and stepped aside and the old men rose to their feet. Job 29:7-8

Whoever heard me spoke well of me, and those who saw me commended me, because I rescued the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to assist him. The man who was dying blessed me; I made the widow's heart sing. I put on righteousness as my clothing; justice was my robe and my turban. Job 29:11-14

"I thought, 'I will die in my own house, my days as numerous as the grains of sand. My glory will remain fresh in me, the bow ever new in my hand.'" Job 29:18,20

"Men listened to me expectantly, waiting in silence for my counsel. After I had spoken, they spoke no more." Job 29:21-22

What is Job doing here? Do you ever do this? What help is it ---- any?

Job's Current Miserable Condition: Chapter 30

Then, Job talks about his present miserable situation:

With respect to the useless youth of the day: "But now they mock me, men younger than I, whose fathers I would have disdained to put with my sheep dogs." Job 30:1

"They abhor me, they flee far from me, and spare not to spit in my face." Job 30:10

Here Job is talking about the people who see him now in his horrible physical state of deterioration. He is afraid of what is happening and what is to come...

"Terrors overwhelm me; my dignity is driven away as by the wind, my safety vanishes like a cloud. And now my life ebbs away; days of suffering grip me. Night pierces my bones; my gnawing pains never rest." Job 30:15-17

"I cry out to you, O God, but you do not answer; I stand up, but you merely look at me. You turn on me ruthlessly; with the might of your hand you attack me. You snatch me up and drive me before the wind; you toss me about in the storm. I know you will bring me down to death, to the place appointed for all the living. Job 30:20-23

Job once again cries out to God and once again is not answered. Instead, the continuous onslaught of tortuous physical infirmity continues and Job attributes this horrendous situation to God. He is convinced that God will bring him down to death... and probably very soon.

"Did I not weep for him that was in trouble? Was not my soul grieved for the poor? When I looked for good, then evil came unto me: and when I waited for light, there came darkness." (Job 30:25,26)

The Problem of Pain

Job continues to point out to God that he tried his best in life to help others and follow the moral laws as he understood them. Of course, as he points out, then everything suddenly went terribly wrong! Now his days and nights are filled with misery...

The churning inside me never stops; days of suffering confront me. I go about blackened, but not by the sun; I stand up in the assembly and cry for help. I have become a brother of jackals, a companion of owls. My skin grows black and peels; my body burns with fever. Job 30:27-30

Job, the Good and Faithful Servant: Chapter 31

"I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl. For what is man's lot from God above, his heritage from the Almighty on high? Is it not ruin for the wicked, disaster for those who do wrong? Does he not see my ways and count my every step? Job 31:1-4

What does Job say that he has done? What does Job say about God here?

After this introduction, it appears that Job suggests that he may have not been so perfect in all his ways.... At least he mentions the possibility, but then he asks God to weigh all this in the balance... and then God will know that he is blameless...

"If I have walked with vanity, or if my foot hath hastened to deceit; let me be weighed in the balance that God may know mine integrity." Job 31:5,6

Then Job goes through a litany of sins that he considers great (however, he says he has not committed any of them): adultery, treating servants shabbily, withholding from the poor, widows and needy children, idolatry (worshipping gold; i.e. money), pride, entertaining evil thoughts concerning others, hypocrisy (covering transgressions as Adam did), being a bad steward of land.

For I dreaded destruction from God, and for fear of his splendor I could not do such things.
Job 31:23

What is one reason that Job says he has remained faithful to God?

Then Job says if he were guilty of any of them that God would be justified in punishing him..... but, he says he isn't!

I sign now my defense--let the Almighty answer me; let my accuser put his indictment in writing. Surely I would wear it on my shoulder, I would put it on like a crown.
Job 31:35-36

The Problem of Pain

“If I have eaten the fruits thereof without money, or have caused the owners thereof to lose their life: Let thistles grow instead of wheat, and cockle instead of barley. The words of Job are ended.” Job 31:39&40

As Job finishes his defense here, does he still say that he is blameless? Is he?

Job concludes his diatribe with the oft-repeated point that he is not guilty of those heinous sins of which he is accused. He obviously believes that God is punishing him for those perceived sins, but is quite perplexed knowing that God knows all things, is all powerful, therefore he wonders how this can be happening to him. Therefore, he vacillates between thinking that he someday will be justified (likely in some mysterious manner) and that he will simply have to face destruction without recourse.

Job is missing a big point or two. What is it (What are they)?

Elihu Intervenes

Chapters 32-37

The next six chapters of *Job* introduce a new character into this human drama... a young man named Elihu. He is quite a conceited individual as will be seen. He has a lot to say in one long speech to Job and his older visitors.

“So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes.”

Job 32:1

But Elihu son of Barakel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, became very angry with Job for justifying himself rather than God. He was also angry with the three friends, because they had found no way to refute Job, and yet had condemned him. Now Elihu had waited before speaking to Job because they were older than he. But when he saw that the three men had nothing more to say, his anger was aroused. Job 32:2-5

Although the practice of the day was to respect the wisdom of the aged, Elihu noted that God gave men certain amounts of knowledge, intellect and wisdom... and he obviously felt that he was given a generous amount of these blessings...

But it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding. "Therefore I say: Listen to me; I too will tell you what I know. Job 32:8&10

After telling the elder three visitors of Job that he gave them every opportunity to answer Job's arguments concerning his condition, they had failed miserably... therefore, he now felt that it was time for him to intervene.

The Problem of Pain

For I am full of words, and the spirit within me compels me; inside I am like bottled-up wine, like new wineskins ready to burst. I must speak and find relief; I must open my lips and reply. I will show partiality to no one. Job 32:18-21

Elihu is anxious to share his answers with all four men. He says that he will “let the chips fall where they may.”

Why is Elihu angry at Job and his friends?

What does Elihu plan to do?

Where does Elihu suggest he got his wisdom for this conversation?

Elihu begins his presentation to Job: Chapter 33

"But now, Job, listen to my words; pay attention to everything I say. My words come from an upright heart; my lips sincerely speak what I know. Answer me then, if you can; prepare yourself and confront me. I am just like you before God; I too have been taken from clay. No fear of me should alarm you, nor should my hand be heavy upon you. "But you have said in my hearing-- I heard the very words--

‘I am pure and without sin; I am clean and free from guilt. Yet God has found fault with me; he considers me his enemy.’ Job 33:1,3,5,6-10

"But I tell you, in this you are not right, for God is greater than man. Why do you complain to him that he answers none of man's words? For God does speak--now one way, now another-- though man may not perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men as they slumber in their beds, he may speak in their ears and terrify them with warnings, to turn man from wrongdoing and keep him from pride, to preserve his soul from the pit, his life from perishing by the sword. Or a man may be chastened on a bed of pain. Job 33:12-19

Elihu speaks to Job concerning the methods by which God may communicate with mankind. It may well not be as Job is demanding and expecting – face to face where each speaks to the other. God is sovereign and He can and will “speak” to His creation any way He sees fit. He may communicate via dreams (He did this often in Old Testament times), visions, the spoken word, angelic appearances, through the words of other people, events of a person’s life, etc.

Job was “blameless and upright” as noted in chapter one... but was he righteous?

"There is no one righteous, not even one." Romans 3:10

the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ--to the glory and praise of God.

Phil 1:11

The Problem of Pain

What has Elihu added to the discussion so far, if anything?
What other ways may God communicate with humanity?

Elihu continues in the chapter to explain that God may even use the painful aspects of a person's life to shape that individual and turn them into someone worthy of Heaven. This is just as was pointed out in the second portion of this treatise; it is one of the ways that God uses the suffering and pain in this world for good.

He prays to God and finds favor with him, he sees God's face and shouts for joy; he is restored by God to his righteous state. Then he comes to men and says, 'I sinned, and perverted what was right, but I did not get what I deserved. He redeemed my soul from going down to the pit, and I will live to enjoy the light.' "God does all these things to a man-- twice, even three times-- to turn back his soul from the pit, that the light of life may shine on him. Job 33:26-30

There are many other reasons why pain and suffering may be allowed by a loving God... as has been discussed at length earlier. For example...

As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life." John 9:1-3

Elihu defends the Justice of God: Chapter 34

Then Elihu said: "Hear my words, you wise men; listen to me, you men of learning. For the ear tests words as the tongue tastes food. Let us discern for ourselves what is right; Job 34:1-4

Elihu tells his listeners to listen as he is about to tell them where they have gone wrong. This includes Job and his three so-called friends.

"Job says, 'I am innocent, but God denies me justice. Although I am right, I am considered a liar; although I am guiltless, his arrow inflicts an incurable wound.' Job 34:5-6

Elihu says that Job claims to be innocent and guiltless... that is, according to Elihu, Job claims to be without sin.

Does Job say that he is sinless?

Why do you not pardon my offenses and forgive my sins? Job 7:21

For you write down bitter things against me and make me inherit the sins of my youth. Job 13:26

Obviously, Job realizes that he has sinned in the past and has not led a perfectly righteous life. Elihu is wrong to say that Job claims perfection.

Job, he says, still claims that God is punishing him severely. Elihu also states that Job says...

The Problem of Pain

For he says, 'It profits a man nothing when he tries to please God.' Job 34:9

Does Job say that trying to follow God is worthless?

There is no doubt that up to this time Job is totally perplexed by his terrible situation. He does not know why God is allowing him to suffer so much. He certainly has come to the conclusion that the wicked seem to prosper more than they should. He also believes that he is living proof that the good suffer far more than they deserve. What a strange paradox. However, he still is holding out hope that sometime in the future, likely after death, his virtue will hold him in good stead with God. In other words, Job's words and actions suggest strongly that he does believe that it is not worthless to attempt to "please God".

Elihu also claims that...

Job speaks without knowledge; Job 34:35

Is Elihu correct on this topic?

After the LORD had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken of me what is right, *as my servant Job has*." Job 42:7

Elihu then tells everyone that God always does right. Due to this fact, Elihu believes that God will always recompense man based on his works... both good and bad.

Far be it from God to do evil, from the Almighty to do wrong. He repays a man for what he has done; he brings upon him what his conduct deserves. It is unthinkable that God would do wrong, that the Almighty would pervert justice. Job 34:10-12

Does God always repay man for what he has done? If so, how and when does God do so? If not, how does God react to the actions of man?

If it were his intention and he withdrew his spirit and breath, all mankind would perish together and man would return to the dust. Job 34:14-15

Elihu goes on to say that God has all things under control. In regard to the wicked, He takes note of their deeds, he overthrows them in the night and they are crushed. He punishes them for their wickedness Job 34:25-26

Although there are answers that God could give to explain His recent actions concerning Job, Elihu suggests the following: *if he remains silent, who can condemn him? If he hides his face, who can see him?* Job 34:29

After all, He is God and He can do whatever He wants.

The Problem of Pain

Oh, that Job might be tested to the utmost for answering like a wicked man! To his sin he adds rebellion; scornfully he claps his hands among us and multiplies his words against God.

Job 34:36-37

Elihu, like the other visitors, pronounces Job as a wicked sinner. He certainly does not have a much different view from the other three visitors, contrary to what he had claimed.

Self-righteousness is condemned: Chapter 35

In Chapter 35, Elihu notes that a man's sinful acts and righteous acts affect other men, but God is so mighty that He has nothing to gain or lose regardless of the acts of men. He also notes that when we cry out to God, we should make sure our motives are pure:

You say, 'I will be cleared by God.' Yet you ask him, 'What profit is it to me, and what do I gain by not sinning?' Job 35:2-3

Elihu is saying that Job is asking what value it will be for him to remain sinless... as so far, God has apparently not taken heed of this fact. Job is not exactly saying this, but the general idea is correct. So then Elihu follows this up with...

If you sin, how does that affect him? If your sins are many, what does that do to him? If you are righteous, what do you give to him, or what does he receive from your hand? Your wickedness affects only a man like yourself, and your righteousness only the sons of men. Job 35:6-8

How does Elihu say God is affected by man's sin? Is he right?

"Men cry out under a load of oppression; they plead for relief from the arm of the powerful. But no one says, 'Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night, who teaches more to us than to the beasts of the earth and makes us wiser than the birds of the air?' Job 35:9-11

Elihu next states that men (including Job) tend to cry out in prayer to God when they are under duress. He suggests that they should better pray with a very humble spirit, recognizing the love, glory and power of God. Elihu gives his opinion on when and under what circumstances God will answer prayer of those afflicted like Job...

He does not answer when men cry out because of the arrogance of the wicked. Indeed, God does not listen to their empty plea; the Almighty pays no attention to it. How much less, then, will he listen when you say that you do not see him, that your case is before him and you must wait for him, and further, that his anger never punishes and he does not take the least notice of wickedness. So Job opens his mouth with empty talk; without knowledge he multiplies words." Job 35:12-16

The Problem of Pain

What is Elihu telling Job with these words. Do you believe he is right?
Was Job approaching God properly? If not, how should he (and anyone) approach God when in pain?

God, the Great Teacher: Chapter 36

Elihu opens the next chapter by saying that he is about to give his listeners some great new insight concerning God. They should be excited about this as they can **be assured that my words are not false; one perfect in knowledge is with you.** Job 36:4

Elihu did not suffer from an inferiority complex. Of course, his words are *not necessarily* God's words. He then proceeds...

"God is mighty, but does not despise men; he is mighty, and firm in his purpose. He does not keep the wicked alive but gives the afflicted their rights. Job 36:5-6

What is he saying about God in the verse above? Is God fair?

But if men are bound in chains, held fast by cords of affliction, he tells them what they have done-- that they have sinned arrogantly. He makes them listen to correction and commands them to repent of their evil. If they obey and serve him, they will spend the rest of their days in prosperity and their years in contentment. But if they do not listen, they will perish by the sword and die without knowledge. Job 36:8-12

Here, Elihu tells us how God deals with those who sin. Elihu says that God communicates with each person to let them know when and how they have sinned. Does this agree with the way Job sees it? Does this agree with how you see it? If not, why not?

The godless in heart harbor resentment; even when he fetters them, they do not cry for help. They die in their youth Job 36:13-14

Elihu tells us that godless people will not respond correctly to God's correction and will die at a young age.

Is this typically true?

But those who suffer, he delivers in their suffering; he speaks to them in their affliction. He is wooing you from the jaws of distress to a spacious place free from restriction, to the comfort of your table laden with choice food. Job 36:15-16

In the next few sentences, Elihu is trying to convince Job that God is speaking and teaching him through his affliction in an attempt to turn him back to God. So he is indeed adding

The Problem of Pain

something new to this long conversation with these words. Maybe Job is not just being punished for being wicked... maybe God is putting Job through this suffering for his own good.

Do you believe that God allows pain in a Christian's life to teach him/her important life lessons?

But now you are laden with the judgment due the wicked; judgment and justice have taken hold of you. Beware of turning to evil, which you seem to prefer to affliction. Job 36:17&21

Elihu is still concerned that in Job's case, he may be going down the wrong path... the path of the godless. If this is true, Job will be in serious trouble.

Then he wraps this topic up with:

God is exalted in his power. Who is a teacher like him? Job 36:22

How great is God--beyond our understanding! The number of his years is past finding out. Job 36:26

With these comments, Elihu introduces a paragraph where he extols the power and omniscience of God as he talks about many of nature's wonders, all created and maintained by God.

What do you think his point is in mentioning these things? What is he trying to tell Job with this reminder of God's greatness?

The Wonder of God: Chapter 37

A thunder storm now begins as Elihu continues his speech:

At this my heart pounds and leaps from its place. Listen! Listen to the roar of his voice, to the rumbling that comes from his mouth. He unleashes his lightning beneath the whole heaven and sends it to the ends of the earth. After that comes the sound of his roar; he thunders with his majestic voice. Job 37:1-4

God's voice thunders in marvelous ways; **he does great things beyond our understanding.** He says to the snow, 'Fall on the earth,' and to the rain shower, 'Be a mighty downpour.' Job 37:5-6
The breath of God produces ice, and the broad waters become frozen. He loads the clouds with moisture; he scatters his lightning through them. Job 37:10-11

He brings the clouds to punish men, or to water his earth and show his love. "**Listen to this, Job; stop and consider God's wonders. Do you know** how God controls the clouds and makes his lightning flash? Job 37:13-15

Tell us what we should say to him; we cannot draw up our case because of our darkness. Should he be told that I want to speak? Would any man ask to be swallowed up? Job 37:19-20

Out of the north he comes in golden splendor; God comes in awesome majesty. **The Almighty is beyond our reach and exalted in power;** in his justice and great righteousness, he does not

The Problem of Pain

oppress. Therefore, men revere him, for does he not have regard for all the wise in heart? "
Job 37:22-24

Chapter 37 is concerned with Elihu pointing to a vast array of things that God is responsible for creating and sustaining. He tells Job that a total understanding of the wonders of God is not possible by mankind. He also asks that Job stop and consider all of these things in the hope that it will change the bitter attitude Job has concerning his current predicament. Maybe he will repent and be forgiven by God.

What right does a man or woman have to question the way God runs His universe?
Do you ever find yourself asking or arguing with God with the way your life is progressing? If so, exactly how do you do this?

God Answers..... and Job..... Finally..... Understands “I Am God, You Are Not” Chapters: 38-41

Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind. He said: "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. Job 38:1-3

God finally intervenes in the discussion.
Why do you believe God waited so long to intervene? Can you relate this to our present age and circumstances? Certainly, God's timing is not our timing. Take a look at this example from the Bible...

Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but **the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves** because the wind was against it. **During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake.**
Matt 14:22-25

The fourth watch of the night is that time between 3:00 A.M. and 6:00 A.M. – the darkest hours of the night. Jesus waited many hours before rescuing His disciples.

There are many other biblical examples to show that God often *seemingly delays* His help when His children are in need. Of course, in the mind of our all-powerful and all-knowing God, He intervenes at just the right time.

What other biblical examples can you think of where God's children must go through seemingly lengthy struggles before God rescues them? There are many.

The Problem of Pain

Why do you believe God came to Job “out of the whirlwind”?

What does He say to Job with His first words?

Is God impressed with the various arguments put forth by the five men?

"Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone-- while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy? "Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb...? Job 38:4-8

God continues to describe His wonders of creation such as the sea, seasons, day, night, the secret of life and death, hail, snow, thunder, lightning, rain, and so much more. He continues and mentions His creation and maintenance of the heavens, stars, constellations, animals, plant cycles.....

"Can you bind the beautiful Pleiades? Can you loose the cords of Orion? Can you bring forth the constellations in their seasons or lead out the Bear with its cubs? Do you know the laws of the heavens? Can you set up [God's] dominion over the earth? "Can you raise your voice to the clouds and cover yourself with a flood of water? Do you send the lightning bolts on their way? Do they report to you, 'Here we are'? Who endowed the heart with wisdom or gave understanding to the mind? Who has the wisdom to count the clouds? Who can tip over the water jars of the heavens when the dust becomes hard and the clods of earth stick together? "Do you hunt the prey for the lioness and satisfy the hunger of the lions when they crouch in their dens or lie in wait in a thicket? Who provides food for the raven when its young cry out to God and wander about for lack of food? Job 38:31-41

Does God next answer Job’s questions concerning why Job was experiencing all of these terrible things? Does God tell Job why He is not addressing Job’s questions?

God continues on the same theme in chapter 39 as He speaks about the wonderful variety of animals in the world. He speaks of the doe, the donkey, the ox, the ostrich and the horse. God points out many of their amazing characteristics and asks Job if he was responsible for their creation. God also asks Job if he is responsible for all of the world’s wonders.

"Do you give the horse his strength or clothe his neck with a flowing mane? Do you make him leap like a locust, striking terror with his proud snorting? He paws fiercely, rejoicing in his strength, and charges into the fray. Job 39:19-21

"Does the hawk take flight by your wisdom and spread his wings toward the south? Does the eagle soar at your command and build his nest on high? Job 39:26-27

What is God doing with all of these questions to Job?

The Problem of Pain

In chapter 40, God asks a pointed question...

The LORD said to Job:

"Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who accuses God answer him!" Job 40:1-2

So, what is Job's response?

Then Job answered the LORD:

"I am unworthy--how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth. I spoke once, but I have no answer-- twice, but I will say no more." Job 40:3-5

So, Job decides to stop his complaining. Now, he plans to simply remain silent.

What do you think about this answer and his new plan of action?

Does Job finally understand what God is telling him?

What would you have said to God in a similar situation?

When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to observe man's labor on earth--his eyes not seeing sleep day or night-- then I saw all that God has done. **No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all his efforts to search it out, man cannot discover its meaning.**

Even if a wise man claims he knows, he cannot really comprehend it. Eccl 8:16-17

For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief. Eccl 1:18

The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe. Prov 18:10

All a man's ways seem right to him, but the LORD weighs the heart. Prov 21:2

For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength. 1 Cor 1:25

What should we learn from this?

Job has yet to repent and really understand what God is telling him. Therefore, God continues...

Then the LORD spoke to Job out of the whirlwind and said:

"Gird up thy loins now like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. "Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself?" Job 40:6-8

Then God tells Job to demonstrate his power..... if he is able to do all the wondrous things that God can do, God would say..... "Then will I also confess unto thee that thine own right hand can save thee." Job 40:14

But..... the fact is, Job, nor anyone else, has any real power over nature, life, etc..... therefore, we should always remember, as God asks in a rhetorical question... "Who then is able to stand before me?" Job 41:10b Of course, the correct answer is "no one".

The Problem of Pain

In chapter 41, God next speaks of the behemoth and the leviathan in some detail. He explains details concerning their size, strength and power and asks Job if he has any control over these two animals. It is also another rhetorical question as God knows that Job is well aware of his helplessness in this and so many other areas of life and the universe. Well, God does have control over all of His creation including these great animals. Therefore, God wants Job to consider the following...

[Who has a claim against me that I must pay? Everything under heaven belongs to me.](#)
Job 41:11

In summary, chapters 40 and 41 tell us that the God that can create and sustain the great animals (and everything else for that matter) and is far superior to any man. To attempt to question any of His actions, therefore, is absurd. God made it obvious with His examples in these last few chapters that He is infinitely more powerful and intelligent than man.

What has God done to prove to mankind that He has their best interests at heart as well? That is, what has God done to earn our faith and trust? Think about Jesus.

Is it ludicrous to question God's actions?

Given the answers to the previous questions, might it be detrimental for us to question and doubt God's actions? If so, why?

[He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.](#) Eccl 3:11

[The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.](#) Isaiah 40:28

Does God finally respond to Job's questions directly?

Does God tell Job why he is going through his current misery?

How do you relate this to your life?

What does God feel the real issue is?

Job has an Epiphany: Chapter 42

Then Job replied to the LORD:

"I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?' **Surely I spoke of things I did not understand,** things too wonderful for me to know. "You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.' **My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you.** Therefore I despise myself and **repent in dust and ashes.**" Job 42:1-6

Does Job finally "understand"?

The Problem of Pain

Note that now Job really gets the point that God was making. He knows now that God will never do anything wrong, that God loves him and will take care of him. Job admits that he still does not understand, but realizes that he is not supposed to understand. Instead, when certain things during our life on earth are too difficult for us to clearly comprehend, it is enough for the Christian who really understands the love and power of God, to place their trust in Him to see them through to the end. Job now says that his “eyes have seen you”. Job is now able to see the entire situation through the eyes of faith. God loves His children to demonstrate their faith. Frequently, Jesus commended people for their demonstrations of faith (see Matt 9:2,22,29; Mark 2:5; 5:34; 10:52; Luke 7:9; 7:50; 8:48; 18:42).

Job is now able to use his faith as he now tells God that although he still does not know what is going on with him and his recent horrific physical and family problems, he knows that God has everything under control, and he is now perfectly fine with that knowledge. Job also repented to show just how sorry he was.

Does Job now know about the conversation between Satan and God that led to his current difficulties?

How important, to Job, is the answer to that specific question (i.e. “why?”) now that Job has his new understanding of God and his place in God’s universe?

Do we ever “have all of the facts” about our varied circumstances in life?

What does God, through the *Book of Job*, want us to remember and then do in our life when we face difficult times?

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Prov 3:5-6

Should be able to understand how God works in our lives based on our human logic? Think about that one for a minute..... then, let us discuss it.....

Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

John 13:7

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD.

"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:8-9

As we end the discussion on this great book, I want to play a portion of a very valuable tape on the *Book of Job*. This tape was made by an excellent teacher, Dr. Dick Keyes. When I first heard this tape while at a Bible study retreat called L’abri, just outside of Boston, I had an epiphany on just what God was saying... at least to me.... concerning the lesson He wanted me to learn from this book. It was very important to me and really changed my life. I now look at

The Problem of Pain

the *pain* that is an inevitable part of life in a much different way... in a way much closer to the way, I believe, God would desire. Let me play the tape and we will discuss it in some detail.

God restores Job...

After the LORD had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken of me what is right, as **my servant Job** has. So now take seven bulls and seven rams and go to **my servant Job** and sacrifice a burnt offering for yourselves. **My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer** and not deal with you according to your folly. You have not spoken of me what is right, as **my servant Job** has."

The LORD blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first.

After this, Job lived a hundred and forty years; he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation. And so he died, old and full of years. Job 42:7,8,12,17

What did God say about the speeches of Job's three "friends"?

What did God say concerning Job?

What did God do for Job after this very big "test" that He had given His servant Job?

Conclusion to *The Book of Job*:

After Job struggles through an incredible amount of physical and emotional pain, the *Book of Job* concludes with Job's life being restored and thoroughly blessed by God. Ultimately, God was pleased by the response of His servant Job; in particular, Job's actions and words *after* God had responded to Job's incessant questioning of Him. Importantly though, it should be remembered that Job never did get the answer he was looking for to his often repeated major question to God. *Why?* Job asked why about many things. In fact, he asked, on at least fourteen different occasions and in fourteen different ways, just *why* God was allowing the terrible pain and suffering in his life that he currently experiencing. However, the basic underlying question was... why did God allow him (a good person who believed and followed God to the best of his ability) to suffer and lose so very much while at the same time allow many other very sinful people to prosper and escape physical pain? That seemed so terribly unfair and inconsistent with what Job believed about His Father in Heaven.

It is very important to consider the likely reasons God finally came on the scene out of the whirlwind and answered Job in the manner in which He did. I truly believe that these reasons are critically important for the many of us who struggle with the devastating pain and suffering that most everyone eventually experiences, regardless of the closeness of their walk with Jesus. First of all, we must remember that God at no time revealed to Job the actual answer for why He was allowing Job to be tested. Of course, God could have easily explained to Job the conversation that He had recently had with Satan in Heaven. However, that would have defeated the whole point of the test. Was Job going to follow and trust in God regardless of what God gave him... or revealed to him... or regardless of how little God blessed him... regardless of

The Problem of Pain

what Job's life on this earth turned out to be like? Would Job love, follow and trust in God simply because of who God is and what Job believed about God? That was essentially the question that was up for debate between God and Satan.

As mentioned earlier, Dr. Dick Keyes, an excellent teacher and leader at the L'abri Christian study center just outside of Boston, gave a great lecture many years ago on the *Book of Job*. He believed that God's purpose in coming to Job out of the whirlwind to remind him of His glory, omniscience and omnipotence, was to make Job re-evaluate his situation and re-orient his mind to see things in the light of two major points God was making to Job:

- God highlighted many, many wonderful and amazing things that He had done and continued to do on a daily basis. Only an infinite Being with all-power and infinite intelligence could do these things.
- God also asked Job to try to put himself in the position of God... would Job be able to accomplish the creation and maintenance of the universe?

Then, after evaluating these two things, did Job really think he had the right to question God on how best to run the universe? In essence, that was God's question to Job.

In fact, Job finally did realize the vast difference between his understanding of life and the universe when compared to the infinite God who *created* the universe. As it is stated in *Job*, now Job was able to "see" God... he was able to understand the incredibly vast gulf of knowledge and understanding that lay between man and God. The simple fact is that God made the universe with all of its mysteries and intricacies. There is no way that a mere mortal can understand all of these things. As Paul put it in the book of Romans, it makes no sense for the clay to question the "Potter". Man questioning an all-loving God is just as absurd.

When Job did re-orient his mind, his questions all disappeared as he handed over all of his questions, doubts and fears to God. Interestingly, modern man has even more reason to release our doubts and worries to God as our God has so amazingly proven His incredible, ultimate love for us. How? He sent His only Son, Jesus, to die for us on the cross; Jesus (God the Son) was willing to not only suffer the torture of those terrible beatings and crucifixion, but He also paid the penalty for all of mankind's sins... this must have been an incredibly painful ordeal... including the separation of Himself from His Father in Heaven while paying this penalty for our sins. That certainly was the ultimate expression of God's love for His children.

I would now like to look at this critically important change in Job from a slightly different perspective. Recall that God and Satan were involved in a contest of sorts in Heaven. Satan had cast aspersions on God's special creation, man. God pointed to a fine man, Job, to show Satan an example of one of God's excellent servants... a person who loved, appreciated and served God in a praiseworthy fashion. Satan responded and told God that the only reason that Job acted as he did was because God had given him so much. Satan's implication was that Job was not serving God simply because of his love for Him. Job needed to get something for

The Problem of Pain

his service. God rejected this position taken by Satan and the “contest” to see how Job would respond began.

God, of course, allowed Satan to take everything of value away from Job except his life, his intellect and reason. Job was able to let everything go because as he noted... "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised." Job 1:21

Even after Satan afflicted Job with sores and a terribly painful disease, Job still was able to say... "Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" In all this, Job did not sin in what he said. Job 2:10

However, Job did want one thing desperately. He wanted God to tell him just why all of these terrible things were happening to him, a man who believed in and obeyed God. God remained silent to all of Job's pleading requests for this answer for a long time.

Although no one can say for sure what God's reasons were for not revealing to Job the actual answer to his question, it is reasonable to believe that God wanted Job to reach a new and higher level in his “walk” with Him. God really demonstrates repeatedly in the Bible that He wants His children to exercise their faith in Him. The Bible states that “without faith it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6). Although God was not willing to answer Job's specific questions, He did intervene and remind Job of who each of them were. He wanted Job to take the time to think! Job, to his credit, carefully considered this God-given information, and finally had a wonderful, life-changing epiphany.

He realized that if he really did believe that God was omnipotent, omniscient, and all-loving, it only made sense that he should be willing to give literally every circumstance in life over to God in complete faith and trust. If he were not willing to do this, then he really did not believe those things about God. Job realized that he truly did believe this about God. God loved him with an infinite love and was certainly not only able, but also totally willing, to make sure that Job would have a life worthy of a child of God... a life that would ultimately be a life of peace and joy and hope. God's providential care was so powerful that He could create those situations that would cause “all things to work together for Job's good” (paraphrase of Romans 8:28) Job had now recognized these things and this new-found trust and faith had brought him into a beautifully trusting relationship with his Creator. So now Job did serve God “for nothing”... Satan had lost his contest with God!

Of course, *The Book of Job* is in the Bible as an excellent lesson for us. We, like Job, will sometimes face difficult and sometimes even tragic situations in our life. When these times come, how should we respond? God shows us in this great book how He hopes we will proceed. He wants us to ask ourselves to consider just how very much He loves us. He wants us to recall what His Son did for us. He also wants us to remember just how powerful and omniscient He is. He literally can and will do anything necessary to provide for us. Then, given those reminders, He just asks us to leave the details in His hands. God promises to work His providential care to our ultimate and total good. Although we will not be able to understand the reasons behind everything that happens to us during our life here on earth, we can know and understand that

The Problem of Pain

God will be watching over us at all times. We must have faith and trust in our greatest ally – our loving Heavenly Father, the God of the universe! Our faith is very pleasing to Him.

The Problem of Pain

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The Problem of Pain
