

SESSION #25

JOB (part 3)

6. God's Speech

When you get near the end of the book, chapter 38, suddenly God finally shows up. If you read through the whole of this dramatic dialogue you may get pretty weary of it all and by the time you hit chapter 38 and God suddenly shows up, the response at least of my heart was *“Oh boy! Finally, God's here. And He's going to tell Job, ‘Hey, sorry about all these difficulties but this is what happened in chapter one. It had to be this way. Sorry about that.’”* He doesn't at all!

He rebuked the three friends of Job as He begins His speeches, as I mentioned in the previous session, because those friends more nearly wrecked Job's faith than the devil himself had done. Can you imagine?

Oh, perhaps you can if you've had some friends like that. Maybe not that bad, but you may have had some friends whom you thought you could count on, people you thought were fellow Christians. And they attacked you in a manner similar to what Job's friends used. And you just couldn't understand. That's surely one of the hardest things to bear – the attacks and the arrows of a friend.

Job knows what that's all about. And God was watching and He rebuked these men for doing a worse job on Job than Satan himself had done.

And then He turns to Job and He gives no explanation at all! J. Sidlow Baxter gives us a possible reason when he wrote, *“There are some things about human suffering which God cannot possibly explain to us without destroying the very purpose which they are designed to fulfill.”* How could God explain what was going on?

This was a test! It was a test of faith. If it's going to be a true test, then Job had to go through it without understanding what was going on or why this was happening. And God even at the end doesn't give him an explanation. The faith test is still going on.

But He does indicate clearly to Job that He saw and not only did He see what was happening, He was concerned and He cared. Even though Job didn't have any sense that God was anywhere near him, God was.

And I think that can be a helpful reminder to you and me. Sometimes, like Job, we don't sense God around, we wonder where He's gone, we wonder why we suffer and pray and there's no answer and things just get worse. And we wonder, where is God? He's still there. He knows, He sees and He cares. But He has His reasons for staying invisible and sometimes incommunicado as He does with Job.

And then these experiences were meant to bring Job to the place where God wanted him. To rest entirely in God Himself, apart from explanations, simply trusting God for Who God is, the character of God – He's pure, He's holy, He's righteous, He is love. And we trust Him for who He is, not for what He does or allows to happen.

When He shows up on the scene, He has a set of speeches of His own, and interestingly enough He has four speeches that match the four cycles of the friends. And each of God's speeches are in the form of a nature poem. He talks about nature. He talks about the cosmos. He talks about animals and what's going on in creation, the creation that God Himself made. When God brings out all these speeches for Job, it's a very interesting set of statements because not only are there no explanations, there's no answers at all.

It's the opposite. All He does is ask Job questions. You look through these chapters and you'll see question mark after question mark. Every sentence is a question. We can categorize God's speeches in these three ways.

He asks Job, "*Can you explain the world of nature?*" And He gives Job example after example. "*Can you explain how that works, Job? Can you explain why that happened?*" And Job, of course, can't answer "yes" to a single question. They're all rhetorical questions. Job can't possibly explain the world of nature.

Then God goes on a little deeper. "*Well then, can you control the world of nature? How can you control the world of nature when you can't even explain how it works?*"

And question after question again, until finally God comes to the third category of questions: *“Why then question the Lord of nature? If you can’t explain what goes on in the cosmos and in our world, and you can’t control it, then why do you question the God who made it and who does control it all?”* He has His own purposes. He is God the Creator; we are the creation. Let us never, never forget that.

As a result of this torrent of questions, God brings Job to an end of himself. And the effect on Job is admiration for God, a shame for himself, a sense of repentance even though he was an upright man. In chapter 40 verse 4, Job says, *“I am unworthy. How can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth.”* He’s ashamed. He can’t say anything. *“I spoke once, he said, but I have no answer. Twice, but I will say no more.”*

A little later, in 42:6 he says – *“Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.”* Repentance. He was an upright man, he was a good man, he was a righteous man, but he wasn’t a perfect man. There were some things he needed to get right with God. And he knows. And he comes to a place of repentance and then a place of new relationship with God. His relationship with God went deep, deep, deep as a result of this dreadful experience.

7. Message of the Book

There’s a clear movement in this book from beginning to end. It can be put into these four points.

First of all, it begins where we began: the **problem of pain** in the life of the righteous. Why do the righteous suffer and the wicked seem to prosper? A common question in the Bible, and in our day. Why do bad people seem to get away with it, and good people hardly seem able to survive? The problem of pain in its widest context. That’s where the story begins.

It moves then to some **wrong answers** given by the men that show up to help Job, supposedly, telling him that suffering is always a result of God’s judgment on sin. No, it isn’t. Sometimes it is, but not always. Suffering is much more complicated than that.

And then the third stage: an **enlightened but deficient answer** by the young man Elihu.

Then **God's perfect answer**, an answer in a very strange way with all of the questions God asks. But it is a perfect answer: *suffering is a test of trusting God for who He is, not for what He does.*

There was an explanation for Job's sufferings. Job wasn't given it, but we know why the things happened to him. Why do we know? Because God pulled back the curtain and we can see behind the scene. In chapters 1 and 2, we see the conversations between God and Satan. And we know that this is the engine that drives this whole drama, because God reveals it to us.

In the epilogue, God pulls back the curtain of time and we see what happens in the end and we can put the whole thing together. And to us it makes sense.

But not to Job! He lived in the middle of all that, never seeing what was going on in that scene in heaven in the first chapters. He doesn't know any of that background, neither do his friends. They have to move along in this life with what they can see, and they don't know the real explanation. And Job himself thought there was no explanation for his suffering. But there was.

And you may feel the same way: *there's no explanation for my suffering.* Oh, there is! You just don't know what it is. And like Job, perhaps we cannot see it yet.

G. Campbell Morgan made this wonderful statement: *"There are no accidents in the life of faith. In its music, the accidentals (the sharps and flats in music are 'accidentals', usually played on the black keys of the piano; he's using a play on words here) ...the accidentals in its music (the music of faith) perfect the harmony."* The black notes perfect the harmony.

My grandfather was born in Belfast, Ireland and emigrated to Canada over 100 years ago. He was very musical but with one peculiar characteristic. He loved to tinker on the piano, but he never played the white keys. He always just played around on the black keys.

Sometimes life may seem like that – it's just full of black keys. But there are no accidents in the life of faith. The black keys of life, the accidentals, are allowed by God to perfect the harmony in the music He's building in and through your life. We need to trust Him to do it.

During the terrible days of the bombing Blitz of London during WW2, a father, holding his small son by the hand, ran from a building that had been struck by a bomb. In the front yard was a shell hole. Seeking shelter as quickly as possible, the father jumped into the hole and held up his arms for his son to follow. Terrified, yet hearing his father's voice telling him to jump, the boy replied, "*I can't see you!*" The father, looking up against the sky tinted red by the burning buildings, called to the silhouette of his son, "*But son, I can see you. Jump!*" The boy jumped into the dark, because he trusted his father, and landed in his father's arms.

The Christian faith enables us to face life or meet death, not because we can *see*, but because we are *seen*; not because we *understand*, but because we are *understood*.

Our next session will take us into the Book of Psalms. I hope you can join me then.
