



Dealing with the Effects of Suffering

Message Notes, March 12, 2017

Job, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Nobody likes suffering (and rightly so), but it is an inescapable part of this gift of life. So how do we deal with it? In this message, Pastor Keith discussed how God can strengthen us to walk through it and how we can bear with it in a way that does not lead to brokenness.

Examples of Suffering

- Natural disasters
- Place, time, circumstances of one's birth
- Economic difficulties
- Accidents
- Sickness, disease
- Death

General Thoughts on Suffering

- Suffering is a given for all who live in this world, even we who follow Jesus.
- In fact, we may at times face even greater suffering *because* of our faith.
- Yes, God allows suffering in His world, because the freedom He has given opens the way for sin, evil and a fallen world. However ...
- God never desires suffering to bring brokenness. He is always present and at work to redeem the impact of suffering in our lives.

Satan's strategy is to get us stuck in one of two deceptive distortions:

1. I become consumed with myself. I am not good. I am not loved. I don't matter. I become consumed with my fear, my pain, my shame, my grief. I turn inward and isolate myself – from God and others. Something is wrong with me.
2. I become consumed with God (as my adversary). God is not good. He is not loving. He is not able. He is absent. He is not fair. I progress from questions to accusations to judgment of Him. Something is wrong with God.

The Book of Job: A story of Suffering

Job, a righteous man who loves God, goes through incredible suffering at the hand of Satan. He truly loses everyone, everything, even his own health. Three friends come to console him. They rightly sit with him in his pain for a few days, but then they begin to ponder, speak and theologize "why?". They offer three perspectives regarding his suffering:

1. You have surely sinned and are being punished.
2. You are a hypocrite; you are not really righteous.
3. You actually deserve even more judgment and suffering.

Clearly, they were not helpful to Job.



Job's own emotional questioning in the face of his suffering:

- Job 27:1-5 – asserting his innocence
- Job 31:1-6 – challenging God
- Job 31: 35-36 – demanding that God answer him
- Job 38:1-11 – and God does answer!
- Job 42:1-5 – Job responds to God's answer.

What emotions/postures characterize Job's response?

Insights from Job

1. We live in a world at war. Evil is real. We have an enemy who is bent on destroying all that is good.
 2. Both the righteous and the wicked will suffer. The story of Job is a healthy correction to the misperceived "absolutism" of Proverbs. This is a book of principles, not promises. Proverbs speaks often of the wise and righteous prospering and the foolish and wicked suffering. Job's story reveals the reality that, while this principle is generally true, it is not an absolute. Job's friends are using this absolute view to conclude Job has surely sinned. Not so here!
 3. There will be times we don't understand why we are suffering. God never actually explains to Job why he is suffering.
 4. Theological answers don't always help. It's a person's heart that is largely under assault; not their head. People just need others to be present, listening, caring. They want to know they are not alone.
 5. There is a bigger story than our suffering. God is always at work. His timing may be very different from our expectations, but He is engaged. Redemption is His glory. He sees where things are going; we only see where they are.
- How does Paul capture this idea in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18?
 - Do you think this perspective is comforting for one in the midst of suffering? How so (or not)?
6. Peace and healing come in our suffering when we "see" God like Job did (42:1-5).

How would you fill in the blanks for the transformation in Job's perspective after he "sees" God?

- From pride to _____
- From entitlement to _____
- From talking about God to _____
- From questioning God to _____
- From accusing God to _____

The Way to Healing (from the brokenness of suffering)

1. Renounce any judgment against God. Some people need to forgive God. Not that He has sinned or is guilty, but they need to release their judgment toward Him and let Him be Lord of His own decisions and actions.
2. Take your pain and questions to God. He can handle anything you bring. He did not condemn Job for his questions and frustrations. God understands our pain! In Jesus, He has entered into our broken, pain-filled world and experienced intense suffering in every way.



- Read Hebrews 2: 17-18. What kinds of suffering Jesus did endure in and around the cross?
- 3. Trust in the goodness, sovereignty and wisdom of God. Satan is lying to us: “God does not see! God does not care! God will not act!” But our loving Father does see; He is present; and He is at work to redeem brokenness (although, honestly, His timing may not fit our longings). Sometimes His redemptive work is rooted in the hope of the resurrection and comes to fruition in glory. This hope is true and real and is the ultimate anchor for our souls, “even should, a man die, yet shall he live!”
- 4. Embrace God’s purposes – seen or unseen.
- 5. Yield to God’s plans by faith.

- Jesus cried out in his suffering on the cross – “My God, my God – why have you forsaken me?!” He expressed real pain, honest questioning, but his final words before he died were – “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”

Reflection Questions

- Anything unclear or confusing in this message?
- Do you have any brokenness that is rooted in suffering (past or present)?
- Are there any principles here that are helpful for you in your journey towards wholeness?
- Are there any principles that are challenging or difficult for you?
- Which of the “Ways to Wholeness” is most helpful for you? How do you begin to apply?