

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

It was September 11, 2001, and I was lying in a hospital bed (not known as the most comfortable in the world), having undergone numerous needles (including those big-long IVs), having to try to eat salt-free hospital food, having had about a total of 2 hours sleep during the night, and waiting to be taken to the cath-lab for my 23rd procedure, worrying about my wife and a million other things. Under my breath, I said, Why me--Lord?--why have I had to go into the hospital about once a month ever since my retirement two or three years ago?

My wife called from home as she was getting ready to come see me and said, turn on your TV to one of the major networks. Then I saw what millions of others were watching--jumbo-jet planes crashing into the Twin Trade Towers in NY--the towers collapsing and all the subsequent death, destruction and suffering of thousands of people! As it became apparent it was a terrorist attack, I said aloud, "Why us--Lord?--why would anyone want to do this to America who has been so good and helpful to so many people all over the world?"

Then I remembered the book of Job and the words of James, "Behold, we call those happy who were **steadfast**. You have heard of the **steadfastness** of **Job**, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful" (James 5:11). I remembered that although Job was steadfast he did ask God the same questions I was asking! I recalled that Job felt free to express to God and those friends who came to comfort him the anguish and confusion welling up in his heart. Job's possessions were gone, his children were dead, his health was gone, his wife had turned against him, and his friends came to berate him. And I thought I had troubles!

But I also remembered the last chapters of the book of Job. There are 3 key verses manifesting Job's **faithful** resolve: "But he knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold" (23:10), "I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I... repent in dust and ashes" (42:6); "I know that my Redeemer lives and at last he will stand upon the earth" (19:25).

QUESTIONS:

1. How does the book characterize Job? 1:1-7. Know anyone like this?
2. Is Satan really limited by God in the evil he may do? 1:8-19
3. If God permitted all this upon Job, why didn't Job blame God? 1:20-22
4. What was Satan's supposed trump card to Job's integrity? 2:1-8
5. How did Job's wife suggest he should react to his predicament? 2:9-10
6. Why did Job's mouthy friends sit in silence for a week? 2:11-13
7. Why would Job pronounce a curse on the day of his birth? 3:1-19
8. Does psychological trauma always accompany physical affliction? 3:20-26

"Job, in his prayer to God, resigned himself humbly and submissively to His will, even though he could not understand it. Even in this emotional extremity Job remembered that he and all of his loved ones and possessions really belonged to the Lord who had given them to him. And so he openly acknowledged before the Almighty that He had a perfect right to do with His own whatever He chose to do (Job 2:20-21)."

--Gleason L. Archer, Jr., in *The Book of Job*, 1982

**No pain, no palm; no thorns, no throne; no gall, no glory
no cross, no crown. --William Penn**

LET US IMITATE JOB'S STEADFASTNESS IN ALL
OUR CIRCUMSTANCES!

LESSON TEXT: Job 4:1---7:21
Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Little babies die at birth, an earthquake devastates a village, napalm bombs melt the flesh of war's innocent bystanders, a friend dies a torturous death from some disease. These are just some examples of the suffering that wrenches out of us the cry: "Why God, why?"

A Christianity which shirks the problem of pain and suffering does not deserve the name. "God's in his heaven, all's right with the world" is not a Christian sentiment. Christianity certainly says God is in heaven, but it also says that a lot's wrong with the world. Mature Christians know that the problem of suffering, especially unjust suffering, is the only substantial objection to the truth of its reality. In fact the problem of unjust suffering is one of the central themes of the Bible. Not only is the Book of Job a part of the Christian revelation and one of the finest pieces of literature ever written; it is also one of the most profound explorations of the tension between divine love and human suffering one could ever read. Psalms, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes also speak to this issue!

Suffering as a painful personal experience is different from the theoretical, theological problem. No one who has just learned they have a terminal disease or lost a child through death wants theological explanations of their suffering. They want love--someone to weep with them, be with them, perhaps physically hold them and, at the very least, give a caring ear to their anguished cries of anger and despair. The depths of personal sorrow or grief are not the place for theological answers, but for practical Christian love.

Job was suffering. He knew not why! He knew that he was a righteous man and knew that he had no secret sins he was trying to hide from God. He believed God prospers those who do right--which is what he had done all his life! Enter--Job's friends who will set Job right about the theological reasons for his suffering and how he needs to react to it! You've heard the saying: "With friends like that, who needs enemies"?--that was how Job answered his friends over and over! What Job needed was sympathy--caring--"a hug"--AND DON'T WE ALL! You will want to be in Bible School to discuss **the most important problem in life!**

QUESTIONS:

1. Why would Eliphaz say to Job, practice what you have preached? 4:1-11
2. Is the mortality of man the reason human suffering is inexplicable? 4:12-21
3. Perhaps Eliphaz is correct--Job's suffering was the consequence of some sin he had done? Is Eliphaz correct? 5:1-7
4. Why doesn't righteousness protect us from suffering? 5:8-27
5. Should Job have become so depressed as to want to die? 6:1-13
6. Isn't Job a little too harsh with his friends? 6:14-30
7. In the light of so *much* human suffering, doesn't life seem at times rather absurd? 7:1-15
8. Does God take delight in harassing us? 7:16-21

A cartoon showed a woman at a counter marked "Educational Toys." The clerk was showing her a box filled with oddly shaped parts. "It's designed to prepare children for today's complex world. Any way you put it together it doesn't come out right." ---*1000 Windows*, Robert Shannon

"A friend is one to whom one may pour out all the contents of one's heart, chaff and grain together, knowing that the gentlest of hands will take and sift it, keep what is worth keeping, and with a breath of kindness, blow the rest away."
--*Quote, Unquote*, Lloyd Cory

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Dr. Willim E. Brown, president of Bryan College, wrote in *Bryan Life*, Fall 2002, "Nancy Granna endured a lifetime of disappointment and failure. The Alsip, IL, native dropped out of high school and then lost her job. She separated from her husband after she had suffered two miscarriages. Whatever she did, wherever she went, she felt that failure marked her. She met her failures with alcohol, which only made her life darker and more meaningless. She found a kindred spirit in Karen Logan, who had her own problems with life. Together they developed a tragic bond of mutual misery and sadness. Together they tried to fight the ugliness that life had become. Then together they decided to give up.

"One day in March, Karen moved into Nancy's house where they drank, laughed, and cried. After four days, they went into the garage and shut the doors. Climbing into Nancy's Monte Carlo they started the engine. Nancy slumped down behind the steering wheel, crying and clutching her wedding album, the symbol of her only moment of happiness. Karen hugged a stuffed walrus and a rose. In less than an hour, their failures in this life ended. On the dashboard they left nine sealed letters to family and friends. Between them on the seat was a sheet of paper with the lyrics to *Fade to Black*, a song by the rock group Metallica. The song poignantly expressed their reason for calling it quits: I have lost the will to live, Simply nothing now to give, There is nothing more for me, Need the end to set me free, Death greets me warm, now I will just say good-bye."

Bildad "the bilious" speaks forth. Bildad's impertinence jabbed at the raw sore in Job's soul.. Job does not need to be reprimanded by some young whipper-snapper of a theologian that he is talking when he should be listening. Job does not need to be reminded of the traditions of the fathers about secret sin. He does not need to be told that his children died because they probably had been sinning against God. Job needs consolation, pity, and comforting. Job gets none of that from Bildad. So Job loathes his life and wishes that he had never been born. He is determined to challenge God to leave him alone and quit torturing him and let him die so he can have some peace!

QUESTIONS:

1. What would make Bildad so insolent toward Job and his grievance against God for allowing him to suffer so? 8:1-7
2. Is there any good in inquiring of the philosophical rationalizations of former generations about suffering when one is suffering? 8:8-22
3. If we had only nature (i.e., creation) by which to understand God, what would we think about him--the same as Job? 9:1-12
4. How could Job, a believer, say God would not listen to his pleas? 9:13-20
5. Is God really so transcendent that he would mock at the despair of the innocent? 9:21-31
6. Why didn't Job know that making proper sacrifices to God (as Abel and Abraham did) would mediate between him and God? 9:32-35
7. When you're suffering do you think God has deserted you and you'd just as soon die? 10:1-12
8. Didn't Job know that the righteous go to heaven after death? 10:13-22

Dr. Brown continues: "Why couldn't Nancy and Karen find enough happiness to make it through their difficulties? Is life such a puzzle that they were discouraged to the point of death? Was life so empty that a nihilistic song by Metallica was their only voice? Maybe they made a sensible choice. After all, if life has no ultimate meaning, then suicide is a viable option. French writer Albert Camus claimed, There is but one truly philosophical problem, and that is suicide...Dying voluntarily implies that you have recognized, even instinctively...the absence of any profound reason for living, the insane character of that daily agitation, and the uselessness of suffering. But is Camus right? Is there no ultimate goal intended for all of us to achieve, a purpose to give meaning to our individual struggles? If there were, it would certainly make difficulties more bearable. Even Friedrich Nietzsche admitted, He who has a why to live for can bear with almost any how. For too long Christian agendas and actions have caused our culture to define Christianity for what we are against. In a world of despair and fear, our sacrifice, our giving, our love and our truth will give rise to the notion that hope is vibrant in the world through a God who cares."

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

When extreme suffering assaults a person's body and soul, such as Job was undergoing, sufferers do not need being lectured to about their complaining and questioning--they need compassion and concern. They do not need to be reminded that they may have left God out of the equation of their misery! That's all Zophar could offer Job and Job wasn't having any of it! Voltaire mentioned three things in life that are difficult. One of those is to suffer an injury. How hard it is to suffer and neither complain nor strike back! Job was at the point of exasperation and desperation.

Zophar had concluded from the traditions of the fathers that an omnipotent God would not let righteous people suffer--only the wicked--*ergo*--Job must be to blame for something bad for God to bring such misery upon him. Job, on the other hand, in severe frustration, lashes out that God is so omnipotent and so transcendent that he cannot be touched by human infirmities--God treats trees better than he is treating Job. God is so "wholly-other" (a term used by neo-orthodox theologians to indicate God is totally apart from creation and humanity) that he cannot or will not be communicated with about human suffering!

Now, of course, none of us would ever feel like Job! Wrong. I would be willing to guess that any Christian who has ever *really suffered* may have had some of the same kind of feelings as Job. Most of us would never admit it to anyone else as Job does to his friends. **How thankful Christians ought to be that their New Testament record tells them God has come to earth in a fleshly body in Jesus Christ and suffered and was heard for his godly fear, and was made perfect and became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.** (Heb. 5:7-10).

How totally grateful and worshipful we should be of the Christ who is not only able, but does, sympathize with our weaknesses--one who in every respect has been put through the same trials we are, and yet without sin. Let us with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need! (Heb. 4:14-16).

QUESTIONS:

1. Why is Zophar so ardent that God open his lips and answer Job's complaints? 11:1-12
2. Is Zophar pressuring Job to confess secret sin? 11:13-20
3. Should Job have been so sarcastic about the suggestions of his friends 12:1-12
4. Does suffering lead people to reason that God is arbitrary in his works? 12:13-25
5. Why does Job say his friends are liars? 13:1-12
6. What would make Job so bold as to dare to present his problem to God? 13:13-28
7. If Job is describing the condition of all mortal humanity, why is he so preoccupied with his own plight? 14:1-12
8. Was there no knowledge of life after death in the time of Job? 14:13-22

Once upon a time there was a young Methodist lady pressured to be baptized by immersion by an aggressive and obnoxious Christian Church evangelist. At invitation time he came down the aisle, took her by the hand and tried to force her to confess the name of Christ and be immersed. Needless to say the young lady was offended, refused to be pressured, and took a very dim view of Christian Church preachers. Years later, she moved to California and married a man who was a member of the Christian Church. After visiting the Christian Church in their town, the minister of the church, a humble and sympathetic man (because he was once a "denominationalist" himself) came to call on her in her home. He laid before her in a logical and compassionate way that she, a professing "Christian," should be willing to do what Christ and the apostles had expressed as God's will in the matter of baptism. She was baptized and lived happily ever after. PRESSURING OTHERS, RATHER THAN REASONING WITH THEM, DOES NOT BRING THEM TO ADMIT THEY ARE WRONG ABOUT ANYTHING!

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

A judge who was on circuit at a certain town was always sure of being annoyed by some sneering remarks from a conceited lawyer. After one such occasion, someone asked the judge at dinner, why he didn't come down strong on the fellow. The judge dropped his knife and fork, placed his chin on his hands, and his elbows on the table as he gave emphasis to his story: "Up in our town," he said, "there lives a widow who has a dog which, whenever the moon is full, goes out and barks and barks at it all night." Stopping short he quietly began eating again. One of the company asked, "Well, Judge, what about the dog and the moon?" "Oh, the moon kept on shining," he said.

These "dogs"--Bildad, Eliphaz, Zophar--kept on barking and howling at Job. They were verbally assaulting Job, insisting that he had some terribly bad sin he was keeping a secret. Otherwise, God would not be punishing him--God would be making him prosper and be happy. But Job kept on shining (i.e., Job kept on insisting that he had no terribly bad secret sins) and that sooner or later, if he could only get an audience with God he would prove to God that he should not be receiving all the trouble and suffering he was going through. Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 B.C.), the famous Roman orator, senator, and author once said, "It is the peculiar quality of a fool to perceive the faults of others, and to forget his own." A modern wit wrote, "Lots of faults we think we see in others are simply the ones we expect to find there because we have them."

Job's friends were more a plague upon his soul than his boils were upon his flesh. He says of them, "Miserable comforters are you all! Will your long-winded speeches never end? What ails you that you keep on arguing? 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" (16:2-4). "Surely mockers surround me; my eyes must dwell on their hostility" (17:2). Job is saying, "If you were in my shoes (suffering as I am) you would be complaining as I am."

QUESTIONS:

1. Have you ever complained of your suffering to the extent that it might have undermined piety in someone else? 15:1-7. Did Job?
2. What does Eliphaz propose as the basis for his *Weltanschauung* (German for "world-view"--or his *paradigm* --definition of problems)? 15:7-19
3. What has Eliphaz's world-view taught him? 15:20-35
4. Does anyone really comprehend what another sufferer needs until they have suffered similarly? 16:1-5
5. Why would Job accuse God of delivering him to the ungodly?@ 16:6-16
6. Why would Job say his prayer was pure when he has just said such awful things about God? 16:17-22
7. How does Job expect God to make a pledge with himself? 17:1-9 (see Heb. 6:13ff).
8. How much help does Job believe his friends have been to him? 17:10-16

"Rage is proportionate to helplessness"--Dr. Clancey Mackenzie, behavioral scientist, on *Fox News* with John Gibson, 10-21-02, analyzing the motives of the "Beltway Sniper" of October, 2002
But then, so is a steadfast faith!

A fault in any one is an ugly thing, and no one likes to see it. The story is told of a painter who was making a painting of Alexander the Great. In one of his battles, Alexander had received an ugly scar on the side of his face. The artist desired to paint a great likeness of the monarch, and at the same time to hide the scar. It was not an easy task to accomplish. He painted him in a reflective attitude, with his hand placed against his head and his finger covering the scar. Christians are not without their faultsBtheir scars. But we do well not to dwell upon the shortcomings of anyone. When speaking of others, we should adopt the painter=s plan, and let the finger of **love** be placed upon the scar, concealing it from the eyes of others.

LESSON TEXT: Job 18:1---19:20
Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Willie White writes in his book, *What the Bible Says About Suffering*, "The plethora of words is beginning to break Job's composure, and he protests against the reproaches of his friends. How pathetic the picture which Job draws of his own wretchedness; broken on every side; his hope gone; forsaken by kinsfolk, friends, and servants; utter loneliness. In his agony, Job reaches out for someone who might understand and care: "Have pity upon me, O ye my friends." Then, suddenly, out of the depths of darkness and despair, Job bursts forth into one of the most sublime expressions of faith ever uttered: "But as for me I know that my Redeemer liveth, and at last He will stand up upon the earth; and after my skin, even this body, is destroyed, then without my flesh shall I see God; whom I, even I, shall see, on my side, and mine eyes shall behold, and not as a stranger." (Job 19:25-27).

Here are the central and the most eloquent verses of the entire book: Old Testament verses which affirm a firm belief in the resurrection. Job may not have understood the *why* of life, but he knew the *Who* of life. We can face most anything in life when we have the assurance that our Redeemer lives and that it will be worth it all when we see him, face to face.

"It will be worth it all when we see Jesus.
Life's trials will seem so small when we see Christ;
One glimpse of His dear face All sorrow will erase,
So bravely run the race Till we see Christ."--Esther K. Rusthoi

QUESTIONS:

1. Should Job have expected to be treated differently by God than everyone else in the world? 18:1-14
2. Was Job a victim, psychologically, of his own rate? 18:5-13
3. Why say that impenitent sinners will have no children? 18:14-19
4. Did Job know nothing of God? 18:20-21
5. Is Job finally confessing that he has some "secret" sin? 19:1-4
6. Does illness (suffering) often cause others to become hesitant to come to the aid of the sufferer? 19:5-22
7. What made Job finally make such a declaration of faith in God's mercy? 19:23-27
8. Should Job be implying such a threat to his "friends"? 19:28-29

Bildad, said to Job, in effect, "Who are you, Job, to complain--do you think God should treat you better than anyone else in the world?" (18:4). Have you, as a Christian, ever been verbally assaulted by your worldly-wise friends for being so self-righteous that you think God will be good to you just because you have a steadfast faith in him? Has your Christianity ever been the cause for others to say, "Who do you think you are, anyway?" SURE YOU HAVE! That just goes with the territory of being a Christian! Remember the patience of Job--and how God rewarded that patience!

"Pray for a faith that will not shrink when it is washed
in the waters of affliction"
Ernest Wadsworth

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

We are studying 7 chapters at once because the harangues of Job's friends in these chapters are presented in much the same kind of impudent and self-important attitude they have displayed in their other lectures to Job. These only intensify Job's despair and depression.

Dr. William E. Brown, in *Bryan Life* (op.cit). "French writer and philosopher Jean Paul Sartre concluded, 'It is meaningless that we are born. It is meaningless that we die.' Today's popular culture takes Sartre's emptiness and throws it in our faces: 'We are fooling ourselves if we think there is a hidden purpose lurking behind the joy and despair of our lives. The nature of life is simple, yet brutal. We are born, we live, we die. Get over it!' Such a meaningless view of life is not derived in isolation; it is a part of a greater whole; it is a mood that leaps from a world-view. Our beliefs about God, morality, and what happens when we die are tied permanently to the question of meaning. After Sept. 11, nonbelievers were visibly perturbed that so many people turned to God the theist magazine *Free Inquiry* devoted an entire issue to their concern, 'From Ground Zero: The Search for Meaning in the Cosmos' (Winter 2001/02). Their message is simple; science tells us that there is no God so we need to dance over the dark abyss and enjoy life before we die. The problem is that science can only tell us how the world works, not why. Science can only give us knowledge of process not an understanding of purpose. Those who put their faith in science see the world through a narrow lens that was never designed to find meaning."

The world-view of Job's friends was much like that which we get from modern science--all they knew of God was from their observation of nature (i.e., the history of the human race, creation, and traditions of human philosophers). Apparently, they knew little, if anything, about God from God's divine revelation. None of the OT had been written down at the time Job and his friends lived. They certainly didn't have the law and the prophets. They knew nothing of a promised Messiah.

QUESTIONS:

1. Is it true that the wicked will always receive their Ajust deserts@ in this life? 20:1-29
2. Name four truths Job uses to refute Zophar's theology. 21:1-34
3. Name 4 sins which Eliphaz accuses Job of keeping secret. 22:1-11
4. Is it true that the penitent always receive prosperity from God in this life? 22:12-30
5. What are three aspects of Job's character he uses to assert God would declare him innocent if he could argue his case with God. 23:1-17
6. Job says two things about the wicked and God in his dissertation in 24:1-25. What are they?
7. What is Bildad's evaluation of God's attitude toward mankind? 25:1-6
8. Is Bildad's short speech a valid reply to Job's defense? 26:1-14

C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, "Now the proper good of a creature is to surrender itself to its Creator--to enact intellectually, volitionally, and emotionally, that relationship which is given in the mere fact of its being a creature. When it does so, it is good and happy. Lest we should think this a hardship, this kind of good begins on a level far above the creatures, for God Himself, as Son, from all eternity renders back to God as Father by filial obedience the being which the Father by paternal love eternally generates in the Son. This is the pattern which man was made to imitate--which Paradisal man did imitate--and wherever the will conferred by the Creator is thus perfectly offered back in delighted and delighting obedience by the creature, there, most undoubtedly, is Heaven, and there the Holy Spirit proceeds. In the world as we know it, the problem is how to recover this self-surrender. We are not merely imperfect creatures who must be improved: we are, as Newman said, rebels who must lay down our arms. The first answer, then, is that to render back the will which we have so long claimed for our own, is in itself, wherever and however it is done, a grievous pain....to surrender a self-will inflamed and swollen with years of usurpation is a king of death....however often we think we have broken the rebellious self we shall still find it alive...the human spirit will not even begin to try to surrender self-will as long as all seems to be well with it...No doubt Pain as God=s megaphone is a terrible instrument; it may lead to final and unrepented rebellion. But it gives the only opportunity the bad man can have for amendment. It removes the veil; it plants the flag of truth within the fortress of a rebel soul."

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Willie White in *What the Bible Says About Suffering*, says of this section, "In his final speech, Job turns upon his friends with a burst of sarcasm for their lack of feeling and insight. His tenacious faith in the Almighty is again seen as he glories in the transcendence of divine wisdom and power, as contrasted to the frailty and ignorance of man.

"Overcome by nostalgia, Job cries out for his prosperity, happiness, honor, and respect which he had known in days gone by. What a contrast to his present wretched state!

"With amazing insight, Job speaks of facts which were unknown prior to the discoveries of modern astronomy; the empty space at the north, the earth poised in space, the curvature of the earth's surface, etc. Who taught astronomy to Job, unless these insights came by divine revelation?

"In chapter 31 Job catalogues the sins of which he is not guilty. The substance of Job's final speech is: 'Till I die, I will not put away my integrity.' Job had a faith and a determination that just wouldn't quit! He is a shining example of one who was determined to remain faithful, even when his world caved in.

"The words of Job are ended. What more could he say? There is no record of his speaking again to his friends in the final eleven chapters of the book."

Job recounts his righteous goodness. Undoubtedly he is not lying--he is willing to swear an oath to God that what he says is the truth. BUT JOB'S WORLD-VIEW IS LIMITED, INADEQUATE, AND THEREFORE, FAULTY! He believes (even as his friends) that in order for God to be just he must **always** reward human beings who live righteous lives with material prosperity and keep them from suffering. Job doesn't **understand** why a just God would allow a just human to suffer. BUT THERE ARE LOTS OF THINGS ABOUT GOD'S WORKINGS IN THIS WORLD WHICH JOB DOES NOT UNDERSTAND--AND GOD IS GOING TO LET JOB KNOW THAT! (Chs. 38-42). **Thank God for his inexpressible gift in the New Testament Scriptures.**

QUESTIONS:

1. What four things does Job swear to God and his friends? 27:1-23
2. What is Job's conclusion from all of human ingenuity and expertise? 28:1-19
3. According to Job, where is wisdom for mankind located? 28:20B28.
4. What is Job's point in reminiscence about his former happy life? 29:1-25.
5. Do you think Job seems to be feeding on being so miserable? 30:1-19
6. Would any Christian today be able to claim such righteous behavior as Job claims for himself? 31:1-34
7. Would you be willing to stand on your record before God as Job was? 31:35-40
8. Would you be exasperated with friends like those who presumed lecture Job on the reasons for his suffering? Have you ever had such?

Socrates of Athens (469-399 B.C.) was pronounced by Plato, his most famous student, the wisest man in Greece. He believed in one God and life after death. In his quest for truth and justice, Socrates offended many of the powerful and pompous Athenians. His enemies conspired against him, getting him indicted for teaching false doctrines. They brought him to trial hoping to humiliate him by forcing him to grovel and beg for mercy. Far from groveling, at his trial Socrates humbled his prosecutors as he defended his integrity and doctrines. Ashamed of their act and embarrassed that they were about to put to death their most eminent citizen, the Athenians were prepared to look the other way when Socrates' prison guard was bribed to allow Socrates to escape. Socrates refused to do so, saying that if he broke the law by escaping he would be declaring himself an enemy of all laws. So he drank the hemlock and philosophized with his friends to the last moment. In death Socrates became the universal symbol of martyrdom for the Truth.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

These chapters are Elihu-101 on the theology of suffering! Elihu-102 comes in chapters 35-37. Elihu was a Buzite. Buz was the brother of Uz (no pun intended) (Gen. 22:21) and son of Nahor. Nahor was the brother of Abraham. Although he was the youngest of all the lecturers, Elihu probably presumed by right of his ancestry to remonstrate with all the disputants (Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar and Job).

Elihu is *angry*. He is angry at Job because he has justified himself rather than justifying God. Elihu is angry at Job's three friends because they haven't been smart enough to answer Job's arguments. Most of Elihu's speech seems to consist of telling Job what great things he is about to say. When he is finished we aren't quite sure what he has said--neither is Elihu.

Elihu speaks of the awesome nature of God and seems to indicate that suffering may be preventive and corrective rather than punitive. In a sense, Elihu is a better theologian/philosopher than his friends.

The speeches of Elihu enhance the suspense of Job's quest for answers by postponing the climax. They restate and reinforce the issues by reviewing Job's arguments (33:8-13) and the lectures of his friends, as well as introducing new ones. But it is evident that Elihu's wisdom was essentially no more effective than that of the three older theologian-friends of Job. Whereas Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar urged Job to repent of sins committed *before* the calamity, Elihu thought Job needed to repent of pride which surfaced *during* the calamity. The first three argued that Job was suffering because he *had committed sin*, Elihu suggests that Job has *now sinned because he has been suffering*. Job doesn't even answer Elihu.

The discussions of Job and his four friends (including Elihu) is a profound example of the futility of human attempts to solve the perplexing problems of life and the mysteries of Divine Providence through purely rationalistic and traditional processes.

QUESTIONS:

1. Does Elihu claim inerrant, divine revelation from God's Spirit? 32:1-14
2. Why does Elihu seem so arrogant about his capacity to debate Job's complaint? 32:15-22
3. What is Elihu's admonition to Job 33:1-12
4. What does Elihu say is the Divine reason for Job's suffering? 33:13-22
5. Elihu says Job's suffering is a message from God--what message? 33:23-33
6. Why does Elihu feel compelled to defend God's working? 34:1-16
7. Is Elihu correct that God's omnipotence keeps wicked people from prospering? 34:16-30
8. Why would Elihu want Job to be even more afflicted? 34:31-37

Ah! The Precocity of Youth

Douglas Dickey, when he was campus minister at Purdue University, Spoke to a "youth session" at the NACC in 1967: "We shall risk one More generalization about modern youth. They have a great deal of pride in their ability to face the facts, to come to terms with reality. 'Tell it like it is,' they say. So...what are the hard realities with which we must come to terms?" One of them, of course, Mr. Dickey, is that with which Elihu thought he had come to terms--- Human suffering. The late Addison H. Leitch wrote in Christianity Today, Dec. 3, 1971: "I hold that accent on youth is One of the clichés of our day. It always has to be the same kind of thing: their great intelligence, their honesty, their opinions, which always must be 'listened to,' and a general outlook that brings guilt upon the parents and that blasts the 'establishment' for lack of understanding."

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The prophet Malachi's prediction of the coming of the Messiah reads: "For he (the Messiah) is like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver." (Mal. 3:2). But why does the refiner *sit*? Because the refining process is such delicate work he does not dare to stand. The Refiner never overdoes. He loves his handiwork too much to under-do. "I wish I had never been made," said a character in one of Marriot's books. "You are not made yet," was the answer, "and you are quarreling with the process.?" "How do you know when the metal is done?" We ask the Refiner, and he tells us, "When you can see my face in it." When we shall have finally been transformed into the image of Jesus Christ, to "mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" we shall know that the Refiner and his fire is done with us. The Old Testament prophets spoke of the Messiah that was to come as a Refiner numerous times. Isaiah wrote of the refining of the Messianic people: "Behold, I have refined you, but not like silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction." (Isa. 48:10). Zechariah 13:9Cclearly a prophecy of the Messianic people (Christians)--"And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested."

So, now we come to Elihu-102. Elihu is still rambling on about God's infinitude and man's finitude! Elihu was partly correct--God uses suffering to refine those who steadfastly believe in him as Job was doing. But Elihu was wrong in presuming that God remains *incommunicado* and *impervious* (Job. 37:24-24) to the suffering of humanity. GOD WILL SPEAK. GOD DID SPEAK (Job chapters 38-42).

Even more certainly, and as fully as it is possible for human beings to understand, God has spoken by becoming incarnated in Jesus Christ and suffered, himself, as The Perfect Human Being!

QUESTIONS:

1. Elihu seems to imply that God is so great that he is impervious to the human predicament--what makes him imply that? 35:1-8
2. Was Job guilty of pride in his defense of his integrity? 35:9-16
3. Isn't Elihu very presumptuous to be speaking on God's behalf? 36:1-16
4. How helpful to Job is Elihu's proposition that God knows what he= doing in Job's affliction? 36:17-21
5. Isn't Elihu contradicting himself in saying Job is rebelling against God? 36:22-33
6. So, what is Elihu's point in describing the majestic works of God in nature? 37:1-13
7. Is Elihu correct in portraying God as *incommunicado* and *unapproachable*? 37:14-24

"God has set the revelation of the Bible in history; He did not give it (as He could have done) in the form of a theological textbook. Having set the revelation in history, what sense then would it make for God to give us a revelation in which the history was wrong? God has also set man in the universe which the Scriptures themselves say speaks of this God. What sense then would it make for God to give His revelation in a book that was wrong concerning the universe? The answer to both questions must be, No sense at all. It is plain, therefore, that from the viewpoint of the Scriptures themselves there is a unity over the whole field of knowledge. God has spoken, in a linguistic propositional form, truth concerning Himself and truth concerning man, history and the universe."

--The God Who is There, Francis Schaeffer, pp. 92-93

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Augustine, the great saint of God, was once walking upon the shore of the ocean while greatly perplexed about the doctrine of the Trinity. As he meditated, he observed a little boy with a sea shell, running to the water, filling his shell, and then pouring it into a hole which he had made in the sand. "What are you doing, my little man?" asked Augustine. "Oh," replied the boy, "I am trying to put the ocean in this hole." Augustine had learned his lesson, and as he passed on, said, "That is what I am trying to do; I see it now. Standing on the shores of time I am trying to get into this little finite mind things which are infinite." Let us be content to let God know some things which we cannot know!

An ill-prepared college student taking an economics exam just before Christmas "break" wrote on his paper, "Only God knows the answers to these questions. Merry Christmas!" The professor graded the papers and wrote this note: "God gets 100, you get 0. Happy New Year!"

God gave Job an exam of about 70 questions in chapters 38-41. Just midway in the exam (40:3-5) Job was forced to cry out—"Only You, God, know the answers to these questions!" I DARE YOU TAKE THE SAME EXAM! Could you answer **any** of the questions? Modern, atheistic and skeptical scientists believe they have the answers to most of these questions through their scientific discoveries. However, no science, past, present or future can say anything about **origins** simply because no human being was present when this material universe was **originated** (i.e., created). This is exactly the point God is establishing with Job—"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?" In other words, "Job you are talking and complaining about matters which are kept secret (Deut. 29:29) within the Divine Mind" (i.e., the **fundamental origins and reasons for suffering of the righteous**). This is a spiritual/moral matter which God does not wish to **fully** reveal. We wouldn't understand it this side of heaven anyway! We can't even understand things we see, let alone those matters which are invisible (Jn. 3:12).

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did God decide to speak to Job? 38:1-3
2. How many different scientific theories are there as to how the universe was **formed**? 38:4
3. What does hold the word in space? 38:5-7
4. Why can't we, with all our technology and scientific expertise, predict the weather (let alone control it)? 38:8-38
5. Why aren't wild animals taught the instinct to provide their own food and that of their offspring? 38:39C39:12
6. How come the ostrich, able to outrun the horse, is unfit to transport a human being into battle? 39:13-25
7. Why is Job so completely subdued from his previous ranting? 40:1-5
8. So, what can we learn from nature and the Bible about the **origins** of our universe? (See Psa. 1:19-22; 33:6-9; 119:89-91; Isa. 45:18; John 1:1-5; Acts 14:15-17; 17:24-29; Rom. 1:18-22; 2:14-15; Heb. 11:1-3, etc.).

A human mechanic may leave the machine he has constructed to work Without his further personal superintendence because when he leaves it God's laws take it up, and, by their aid, the materials of which the machine Is made retain their solidity---the steel continues to be elastic, the vapor keeps its expansive power. But when God constructed his "machine" we call "the universe" he could not leave it, or any minute part of it, in its immensity and intricacy of movement, to itself; for, if he retires, there is no second God to take care of this machine. Not from a single atom of matter can he for a moment withdraw his superintendence and support. Each successive moment, all over the universe, the act of creation must be repeated. The existence of the universe witnesses to a perpetuity of creating influence. Active omnipotence must flood the universe, or its machinery stops and its very existence terminates. The signs of an all-pervading supernatural energy meet us wherever we turn. Every leaf saves in it, every plant in all its organic processes lives in it; it rolls round the clouds, else they would not move; it fires the sunbeam else it would not shine; and there is not a wave that restlessly rises and sinks, nor a whisper of the wanton wind that "blows where it wills" (John 3:8) but bespeaks the immediate intervention of God.
---Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

According to the Guinness Book of Records, the largest and heaviest of animals are the blue whales, some of which weigh over 100 tons (that's 20,000 pounds). The largest land mammal is the African bush elephant which averages 5.6 tons. The smallest animal is the tiny shrew of northern Europe which is rarely longer than 1 2 inches from nose to tail. --*Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*.

The famous preacher of Memphis, TN, the late Robert G. Lee, tells this story: "M. G. Rainey, a Knoxville, TN, grocer gave his fox terrier, Tiny, to a friend who was going to New Orleans. Shortly after the friend's arrival in the Louisiana city, Rainey got a letter saying that Tiny had disappeared. One day as Rainey was preparing to lock up his store, he heard a scratching at the door. He opened it and there was Tiny. It had taken Tiny 11 weeks and 3 days to make the trip, which is 771 miles by highway." *ibid*.

A giant python swallowed three men at the bottom of a ninety-foot oil exploration well at Murar Megan, South Sumatra. When the third man to go down failed to return, a fourth man armed with dynamite was lowered into the well. The snake immediately reared up at him. Realizing that his mates had been swallowed, the man signaled to be pulled up. Then he dropped the dynamite into the well, killing the python! The three victims were later found dead in the snake's stomach! *Ibid*.

Animals are awesome wonders of God's creation. Many of them can do incomprehensible things. But they all live in the realm of congenital instinct--they have no freedom of choice--they do what they must do to perpetuate their species. Not so with human beings. They have eternal souls--they have freedom of choice and will. They are able to take stimuli and make logical deductions. Human beings believe, love, worship, create and are capable of remorse and repentance. Job was brought to realize that he could not even understand the animal world let alone the human world and the Divine Mind! Yes! Even the animal world demonstrates there is a Supernatural Purpose in life in this universe--but what that Purpose is has to be **revealed** to mankind by the **Omniscient God-Creator and Redeemer!**

QUESTIONS:

1. Why was God speaking to Job out of the *storm*? 38:1; 40:6
2. What is God's challenge to Job? 40:7-14
3. Who is Behemoth and why does God question Job about him? 40:15-24
4. Who is leviathan and why does God ask Job about him? 41:1-34
5. What is Job's final conclusion about his suffering and God? 42:1-6
6. Why would Job be so willing to intercede for his friends? 42:7-9
7. Why did God give Job *twice* as much as he had before? 42:10-16; James 5:11

Two or three years before the death of John Newton (1752-1807), composer of "Amazing Grace," when his sight was so dim that he was no longer able to read, a friend and brother in the ministry called to have breakfast with him. Their custom was to read the Word of God following mealtime, after which Newton would make a few short remarks on the Biblical passage and then appropriate prayer would be offered. That day, however, there was silence after the words of Scripture, "by the grace of God I am what I am" were read. Finally, after several minutes, Newton spoke, "I am not what I ought to be! How imperfect and deficient I am! I am not what I wish to be, although I abhor that which is evil and would cleave to what is good! I am not what I hope to be, but soon I shall be done with mortality, and with all sin and imperfection. Though I am not what I ought to be nor what I wish to be, nor yet What I hope to be, I can truly say I am not what I once was, a slave to sin And Satan. I can heartily join with the apostle and acknowledge that "by the grace of God I am what I am." Then, after a pause, he said, "Now, let us pray!" Isn't this how we should be thinking of ourselves after our study of the book of Job? It has been a marvelous study. Now we are ready to really appreciate the Gospel ---the New Covenant of Grace in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord.