

Suffering
Job 2: 10

Shall we receive good from God and shall we not receive evil?

Dear Friends,

One of the oldest books of the Bible is the Book of Job. Job was probably a contemporary of Abraham. Job is known for his patience in the midst of suffering. We would do well to learn from Job how to be patient in suffering.

The Bible tells us that Job was a man who was a believer in God; he feared God and turned away from evil. He was extremely blessed by God with material wealth, but he didn't trust in that wealth, he continued to trust in God. It is written of Job that he would rise early in the morning and make sacrifices to God for his children, for "it may be that my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." Job did this continually.

The Book of Job after telling us this about the man takes us behind the scene, so to speak. If Job were a play on Broadway, the director would take the curtain and pull it back so that you can see what is going on that no one else can see or know about. God the Holy Spirit tells us that Satan came before God to accuse Job. That is what Satan does, he

always lies and accuses. In this instance Satan says to God: “Does Job fear God for no reason?” Satan implies that the reason Job believes in God is because God blessed him with material wealth. Satan says to the Lord that if you take it all away, Job will curse You, The Lord, to Your face. With that God replies: “Behold, all he has is in your hand, only do not stretch out your hand against him.”

With that, Satan unleashes his fury against Job. In an instant, Job loses all of his material wealth, as well as killing innocent young people. Upon hearing the news Job tears his robe, shaves his head, and then falls down and worships God. Satan, not satisfied with the results, goes back before the Lord. God brags on Job, talking about his faith and integrity. Not to be denied, Satan answers God by saying: “Skin for skin, all that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out your hand and touch his flesh, and he will curse you to your face.” To which God replies, “He is in your hand, just don’t touch his life.” So Satan attacks Job again, this time with loathsome sores. His wife tells Job to curse God and die, to which Job replies: “Shall we receive good from God and not evil?” But Job still did not sin with his lips.

Job’s three friends come to comfort him, but some comfort they gave! They told Job that he deserves this, which is happening to him,

that he wasn't totally innocent in this matter. Job is told he should repent of the evil that he has done. One says that Job should suffer more and that he deserved even worse suffering than he was going through, another questioned Job's faith, saying he didn't have enough faith, surely that must be the reason why this is happening to him. After hearing all of this unsolicited advice, Elihu asserts that God is just and right in all He does. And then, in a powerful yet humbling conversation between God and Job, where God does most of the talking, God says to Job: "Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God let that person answer to God." Job falls silent. He knows his place before God, saying: "I am of small account, what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth" Job won't say anything else. He is going to listen to God.

The Lord then challenges Job, asking Him where he was when God created the world? God tells Job to put his big boy pants on, "dress for action like a man; I will question you and you make it known to me. Will you even put me in the wrong?" Job comes to his senses. He repents, asking God for forgiveness. And God forgave Job and restoring and blessing Job.

Job teaches us that God's children do indeed suffer. In this sinful, broken world there will be suffering, pain, trial and tribulation. When trials do come their way, don't immediately assume that God is punishing you for some certain sin you committed. That is what the Pharisees asked Jesus when they saw the man born blind in John 9: "Who sinned, was it this man or his parents, that caused this man to be born blind?" Do not think that God is out to get you. Don't think that God is rejecting you when you suffer trials and tribulations. There are people who when they see suffering see only God's wrath and judgment. But know this, God loves you with an everlasting love. He sent His only Son, Jesus, into this world to taste the suffering that we experience. Jesus lived, suffered, He died and was forsaken by God, all so that you might know that because Christ suffered for you Christ has made you His child in Baptism. You belong to Him and nothing will separate you from His love.

Know that Christ is at work in suffering, to accomplish His good and gracious will. The Apostle Paul suffered with a thorn in the flesh, he pleaded with the Lord three times that the thorn would be taken away but God said that His grace is sufficient for you, the power of God is made perfect through our weakness.

Job doesn't fully understand why he is suffering, he can't explain it, rather, he simply trusts in God who He knows loves him with an everlasting love. He makes this great confession of faith proclaiming that He knows that His Redeemer lives! He has an unshaken confidence that God loves him and is his Redeemer.

Dear friend, we are in a troubling time where we will see and experience suffering. Perhaps you are suffering at the present. God tells us in the Book of Job that suffering is not simply God's judgment upon sin; suffering may be a trial that God permits for our good or the good of someone else. God knows suffering. Jesus suffered for you, so that you might know that Jesus hears your prayer and helps you in your time of need. And you have God's promise that no matter how bad things get, God works all things together for good for those who are called according to His plan. He has called you by name in your Baptism. You belong to Him. Nothing will separate you from His love.

Amen

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you always.

Amen