

Session 4

February 2, 2020

WHAT IS GOD'S ANSWER TO SUFFERING?

Job 40:1-8; 42:1-6

When it is all said and done, there is only one sin: pride. Wanting to be God got Lucifer kicked out of heaven, and Adam and Eve kicked out of Eden. And it's the same sin we wrestle with every day. Deep down, we want to be God.

While Job was blameless in his actions, he too, fell prey to pride's temptation. In defending himself against his friends' accusations, Job ultimately went in the opposite direction, essentially declaring himself to be innocent and God to be unfair. While it is no sin to question God (God has broad shoulders...He can handle our questions!), it *is* a sin to presume we know more than He does. This book ends with God rebuking Job for his presumptions.

Pride distorts our view of God's purpose (40:1-5). The flexing of God's muscle before the presumptuous Job began in chapter 38 with these ominous words: "Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me!" The phrase "words without knowledge" is the key. Job had set himself up as an expert on how God operates. In the next two chapters, God challenged Job to explain those mysteries that only God could explain. By chapter 40, Job knew the best thing to do was to keep his mouth shut (vv. 4-5). Remember: seldom do we get ourselves into trouble by saying *too little!*

Pride distorts our view of God's justice (40:6-8). So often, our human perspective of justice is particularly selfish. When things go the way we think they should, we call it "fair." When things go against us, what we believe, or what we think ought to happen, we call it "unfair." But being *fair* and being *just* are two different things. Job's self-defense bordered on self-righteousness. His declaration of innocence made God out to be unfair. God's accusation of Job in verse 8 is particularly scathing: "Would you declare Me guilty to justify yourself?" In other words, did Job understand that he was trying to trade places with God, by making God the sinner and Job the righteous? From a human perspective, Job saw his suffering as *unfair*. But from God's perspective, He is *just* in whatever He does. He is God!

Pride is destroyed by humility and submission (42:1-6). There is only one cure for pride, and that is humility. And Job reminds us of the bitter pill humility so often is! Job's response to God's rebuke contains all the right elements. First, there is confession. The word "confession" in the Bible means *to say the same thing*. In verses 2 and 3, Job does just that: he agrees with God, "Surely I spoke about things I did not understand; things too wonderful for me to know." But confession is only the first step. Second, there needs to be repentance. Repentance refers to *a change in one's thinking that leads to a change in one's behavior*. Job's explanation for the change in his attitude was his confrontation with God. All that he heard—or been taught—in the past about God may have been accurate but was somewhat foggy in his mind. God's appearance to Job had brought a new and startling clear understanding of who exactly Almighty God is (v. 5). Verse 6 demonstrates that Job's distorted view of God's purpose and God's judgment had been made right: "Therefore I take back my words and repent in dust and ashes." The closer one

gets to the light, the more clearly one sees his own imperfections. Hence, a fresh view of the holiness and power of God always produces introspection and self-evaluation. Job saw God, then looked at himself; and he didn't like what he saw. His *suffering* sent him to the ash heap the first time (Job 2:8). His *submission* brought him back to it the second time.