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Conversations with Elihu

Is it possible that God uses suffering to bring us to Himself?

Is it possible that God uses suffering to teach us?

Is it possible that God uses suffering to protect us?

Is it possible that suffering produces great spiritual benefits?

Job 1:8-9

And the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?" Then Satan answered the Lord and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason?"

Revelation 12:10

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God."

Eliphaz—Experience—You sinned!

Bildad—History—God is just!

Zophar—Dogmatist—Repeats the narrative

Job 31:35

Oh, that I had one to hear me!

(Here is my signature! Let the Almighty answer me!)

Oh, that I had the indictment written by my adversary!

Job 32:1-5

So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. Then Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, burned with anger. He burned with anger at Job because he justified himself rather than God. He burned with anger also at Job's three friends because they had found no answer, although they had declared Job to be in the wrong. Now Elihu had waited to speak to Job because they were older than he. And when Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, he burned with anger.

Job 32:18-22

*For I am full of words;
the spirit within me constrains me.
Behold, my belly is like wine that has no vent;
like new wineskins ready to burst.
I must speak, that I may find relief;
I must open my lips and answer.
I will not show partiality to any man
or use flattery toward any person.
For I do not know how to flatter,
else my Maker would soon take me away.*

Job 33:3

*My words declare the uprightness of my heart,
and what my lips know they speak sincerely.*

Job 33:6-7

*Behold, I am toward God as you are;
I too was pinched off from a piece of clay.
Behold, no fear of me need terrify you;
my pressure will not be heavy upon you.*

1. God is Gracious

Job 33:9-14

*You say, 'I am pure, without transgression;
I am clean, and there is no iniquity in me.
Behold, he finds occasions against me,
he counts me as his enemy,
he puts my feet in the stocks
and watches all my paths.'
"Behold, in this you are not right. I will answer you,
for God is greater than man.
Why do you contend against him,
saying, 'He will answer none of man's words'?
For God speaks in one way,
and in two, though man does not perceive it.*

God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world

-C. S. Lewis, The Problem of Pain

Job 33:29-30

*"Behold, God does all these things,
twice, three times, with a man,
to bring back his soul from the pit,
that he may be lighted with the light of life."*

- **Sometimes God uses suffering to protect and teach us.**

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Hebrews 12:3-11

Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,
nor be weary when reproved by him.
For the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
and chastises every son whom he receives.”

It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

2. God is Just

Job 34:5-9

For Job has said, ‘I am in the right,
and God has taken away my right;
in spite of my right I am counted a liar;
my wound is incurable, though I am without transgression.’
What man is like Job,
who drinks up scoffing like water,
who travels in company with evildoers
and walks with wicked men?
For he has said, ‘It profits a man nothing
that he should take delight in God.’

- **If God is unjust, He is not God.**

Job 34:10-12

“Therefore, hear me, you men of understanding:
far be it from God that he should do wickedness,
and from the Almighty that he should do wrong.
For according to the work of a man he will repay him,
and according to his ways he will make it befall him.
Of a truth, God will not do wickedly,
and the Almighty will not pervert justice.”

- **If God were unjust, there would be no justice on earth.**

Job 34:16-30

“If you have understanding, hear this;
listen to what I say.
Shall one who hates justice govern?
Will you condemn him who is righteous and mighty,
who says to a king, ‘Worthless one,’
and to nobles, ‘Wicked man,’
who shows no partiality to princes,
nor regards the rich more than the poor,
for they are all the work of his hands?
In a moment they die;
at midnight the people are shaken and pass away,
and the mighty are taken away by no human hand.

*“For his eyes are on the ways of a man,
and he sees all his steps.
There is no gloom or deep darkness
where evildoers may hide themselves.
For God has no need to consider a man further,
that he should go before God in judgment.
He shatters the mighty without investigation
and sets others in their place.
Thus, knowing their works,
he overturns them in the night, and they are crushed.
He strikes them for their wickedness
in a place for all to see,
because they turned aside from following him
and had no regard for any of his ways,
so that they caused the cry of the poor to come to him,
and he heard the cry of the afflicted—
When he is quiet, who can condemn?
When he hides his face, who can behold him,
whether it be a nation or a man?—
that a godless man should not reign,
that he should not ensnare the people.*

Job 34:23

*For God has no need to consider a man further,
that he should go before God in judgment.*

Job 35:9-11

*“Because of the multitude of oppressions people cry out;
they call for help because of the arm of the mighty.
But none says, ‘Where is God my Maker,
who gives songs in the night,
who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth
and makes us wiser than the birds of the heavens?’”*

*Any man can sing in the day. It is easy to sing when we can read the notes by daylight; but he is the skillful singer who can sing when there is not a ray of light by which to read.
-C. H. Spurgeon*

3. God is Great

Job 36:1-4

And Elihu continued, and said:

*“Bear with me a little, and I will show you,
for I have yet something to say on God's behalf.
I will get my knowledge from afar
and ascribe righteousness to my Maker.
For truly my words are not false;
one who is perfect in knowledge is with you.*

Job 36:7

*He does not withdraw his eyes from the righteous,
but with kings on the throne
he sets them forever, and they are exalted.*

- **Don't get angry and bitter toward God.**

Job 36:13

“The godless in heart cherish anger; they do not cry for help when he binds them.”

- **Don't look for a shortcut and miss what God is teaching you.**

Job 36:18-19

*Beware lest wrath entice you into scoffing,
and let not the greatness of the ransom turn you aside.
Will your cry for help avail to keep you from distress,
or all the force of your strength?*

- **Don't even think about taking your life.**

Job 36:20

Do not long for the night, when peoples vanish in their place.

- **Don't turn from God and turn to sin.**

Job 36:21-22

*Take care; do not turn to iniquity,
for this you have chosen rather than affliction.
Behold, God is exalted in his power;
who is a teacher like him?*

Job 36:26

Behold, God is great, and we know him not; the number of his years is unsearchable.

Job 37:14-24

*“Hear this, O Job;
stop and consider the wondrous works of God.
Do you know how God lays his command upon them
and causes the lightning of his cloud to shine?
Do you know the balancings of the clouds,
the wondrous works of him who is perfect in knowledge,
you whose garments are hot
when the earth is still because of the south wind?
Can you, like him, spread out the skies,
hard as a cast metal mirror?
Teach us what we shall say to him;
we cannot draw up our case because of darkness.
Shall it be told him that I would speak?
Did a man ever wish that he would be swallowed up?
“And now no one looks on the light
when it is bright in the skies,
when the wind has passed and cleared them.
Out of the north comes golden splendor;
God is clothed with awesome majesty.
The Almighty—we cannot find him;
he is great in power;
justice and abundant righteousness he will not violate.
Therefore men fear him;
he does not regard any who are wise in their own conceit.”*

Does God use suffering to teach us?

Romans 8:28

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.