



The Tri-Cities Edifier

Volume 11

August 24, 2025

No. 34

Why?

by Branden Lingerfelt

Last quarter I was thankful to take part in Eric Hamilton's study of Job. One of the big questions addressed in the book is, "Why do people suffer?" At some point in life all people must wrestle with this question. A common refrain from many people, believers and non-believers alike is, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" Sometimes, if we are the ones suffering, we may rephrase the question, "Why is this happening to me?" or "What did I do to deserve this?" Just like in the book of Job, sometimes the answer is not always clear or the one we expect, yet we crave an explanation.

Job's friends offered their opinions, which basically concluded that Job must have sinned and was being punished (Job 22:5). Job rejected their premise, but he was still unsure why he was suffering and wished for an audience with God to plead his case (Job 9:14-16), one which he terrifyingly received (Job 38). Job's question was not completely answered the way he expected but he was blessed with a personal conversation with God and reminded to trust in the power and authority of the creator of the universe (Job 40:4-5). The account ends with Job sacrificing to God, redeeming his friends, and receiving more than he lost (Job 42:7-17).

One comment in our class was that the book of Job was written for us as an example of how to suffer. Job's faithfulness and trust in God and his experience was recorded so we can learn from him and come to know more about our God. Likewise, the New Testament addresses this same problem of suffering. In one remarkable account in John 9, where Jesus and his disciples come across a blind beggar. Just like Job's friends (and sometimes us), Jesus's disciples want to assign blame and understand why someone could cause suffering, such as the man being born blind. They ask, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (v.2).

Jesus gives them an answer they may not have expected, stating, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him" (v. 3); He then proceeds to heal the man of his blindness (v. 6-7) This act eventually leads the man to profess Jesus as Lord and preach the Good News to the Pharisees (v.27; 38). His life of suffering led to the greatest confession any person could ever make. Just like in Job, this response to suffering is recorded for us centuries later so we can think about how to suffer.

Both examples teach us two lessons:

First, we should not judge suffering as punishment for wrongdoing or success as a reward for faithfulness; Matthew 5:45 says it rains on both the just and the unjust. We may never know why we or someone else may suffer. Both Job's friends and the disciples tried to explain why someone suffers and in both instances God shattered their expectations. We, too, are guilty of this mistake. An example of this is seeing someone begging for food and acting with distrust or judging that the reason for the one's suffering is due to poor judgement or mistakes made. In other words, it is deserved. When we get diagnosed with illnesses, we may wonder if habits we had or choices we made could have led to that sickness. Conversely, many who believe in the prosperity gospel see material success as a sign of God's favor and strong faith; the implication is that if the person is poor or materially unsuccessful, God is not showing him or her favor or else his or her faith is weak. We must resist all these assumptions. Jesus said blessed are the poor and meek (Matthew 5:3-4) and He warned that many who pursue material gain will have difficulty entering the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 19:23). No matter the circumstances, we must be careful not to assign explanations for which we don't have answers.

Second, we must reframe how we view our suffering. This lesson connects the two accounts. Instead of worrying about why this happened, I need to ask how my suffering can glorify God. Just as these stories were recorded to encourage us,

what we suffer can be used to encourage others. This is a lot easier said than done. Job went through many low moments and the blind man most likely never imagined he would receive healing; however, both ended up with a greater gift than either could imagine: A deeper relationship with their Lord. We may never understand the “why?” but we can understand how to suffer: With trust that God will use our circumstances for His glory and through the grace, mercy, and strength of our Lord Jesus Christ, we can endure. May we be able to say, just as Paul did in Philippians 4, “I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through Him who gives me strength.”

Blinded within Our Mind

Sometimes we can become so determined to do something that we lose touch with reality. This was the case with the Jewish leaders who refused to believe in Jesus. They were so caught up in their own traditions that they could not recognize the signs and wonders Jesus performed to prove He was the Messiah foretold in prophecy.

Even after the church was established, Paul described the Jews who rejected the gospel this way: *“But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart.”* 2 Corinthians 3:14-15

Their stubborn hearts refused to see what was clearly written, leaving them blinded to the truth.

In the Old Testament, there is a somewhat humorous account of someone who was literally blind to what was going on around him. Balaam could not see what his donkey saw. Blinded by his greed for gain from the Moabites (Jude 11), he was determined not to be deterred or delayed.

In Numbers 22, Balaam became so intent on going where he wanted that he ended up having a conversation with his own donkey. God was angry with Balaam for seeking profit from the Moabites, knowing that Balaam’s intentions were not good. As Balaam traveled, the Angel of the Lord stood in his path—but Balaam could not see him. The donkey could.

The scene unfolds comically yet seriously: the donkey veered off the road, crushed Balaam’s foot against a wall in an attempt to get around the Angel, and finally lay down in the middle of a narrow passage. Infuriated by these delays, Balaam struck the donkey three times, even wishing for a sword to kill it on the spot. Then, by the Lord’s doing, the donkey spoke:

“Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden, ever since I became yours, to this day? Was I ever disposed to do this to you?” Numbers 22:30

Balaam answered, “No.”

The donkey pointed out what should have been obvious: it had never acted this way before, so something unusual must be happening. Yet in his love for “the wages of unrighteousness” (2 Peter 2:15), Balaam had lost all touch with reality and sinned against the Lord.

We too can be blinded to the way of righteousness when we stubbornly pursue our own path. Let us pray for the wisdom and humility to see clearly, using God’s Word to discern between good and evil (Hebrews 5:14).