

Day #8: The Uncomfortable Truth about Trouble: God is Complicit!

Read: Genesis 37:26-28 & Genesis 45:4-5; Job 2:1-8; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; 1 Cor. 2:7-8

This is our second day of venturing out into uncomfortable waters concerning the connection between God and trouble. Yesterday we contemplated *God's sovereign control over everything*. Today's truth is perhaps even more uncomfortable! It is that – there's no escaping it – God is complicit in our trouble.

JOB

The best place to start is with the story of Job, the quintessential story of faith under fire. Was Satan free to strike Job at will? No, Satan had to ask permission from God, and God set boundaries on Satan's power to harm.

JOSEPH

It was Joseph's brothers who betrayed him. THEY sold him as a slave to merchants traveling to Egypt. But many years later, when his brothers came to the horrifying realization that Pharaoh's official was none other than their little brother Joseph, they heard Joseph's amazing statement: "And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that **God sent me ahead of you.**" (Genesis 45:5)

Years later he would reaffirm this conclusion to his brothers: "Don't be afraid. You intended to harm me, but **God intended it for good** to accomplish...the saving of many lives." (Genesis 50:19-20)

PAUL

God entrusted Paul with direct revelation and knowledge unlike any other man besides Jesus. So to keep him from becoming proud, **God** gave him a "thorn in the flesh," also called in the same verse "a messenger of Satan." (2 Corinthians 12:7)

JESUS

And the most beautiful gift ever given, our salvation, which brings us richness and joy every day, is the result of the most horrific suffering and vile crime ever committed, when Satan struck Jesus on the cross. (1 Corinthians 2:7-8)

While there are aspects of this mystery not to be grasped this side of heaven, what is abundantly clear is that the forces of heaven (good) and hell (evil) come together in pain. TROUBLE is where these opposite (but not equal) forces meet to work for entirely opposite ends: God to lift, bless, and strengthen; Satan to bring down, kill, and destroy.

Will our faith stand? Will trouble make us better or bitter? Which will it be?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How might we be comforted by the knowledge that Heaven (God/good) and Hell (Satan/evil) meet together in suffering?

How could this perspective change our response to trials and hardship?

Do you think the scene in heaven that resulted in Job's great trials still happens today, or was that just a unique occurrence? (Consider Zachariah 3:1 & Revelation 12:10b.)