

You Asked For It...Undeserved Suffering!

Job 42:1-6
July 14, 2019

There is a three letter question that I am pretty sure we have all asked God.

I know I have asked God this question just about every day... especially when I watch the news, listen to people's life stories and walk thru my own journey in life.

The big question with only three letters is, "Why?"

Little kids ask this question about every other minute as they are living and exploring life each day..."Why does the grasshopper jump? Why is the sky blue? Why do I have to eat my vegetables?"

But as adults we begin to limit our "Why?" question for the big issues in life. In fact, if we really take a good look at when we ask the "Why?" we will most likely discover that we ask God the "Why?" when we experience or witness suffering...more specifically undeserved suffering.

If you have experienced, or maybe I should say, when you experience, undeserved suffering, how do you get through it? How do you move beyond the "Why?"

In the bible there is one man who is synonymous with undeserved suffering. His name is as long as the question, "Why?" This man is Job. We will walk with Job and discover how he worked thru his undeserved suffering.

But before we journey with Job, I want us to walk into an undeserved suffering scene that took place only 77 years ago to millions of people. Of the millions I want to focus on one man who experienced the undeserved suffering of being a prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp.

I marvel at the human life stories that come out of World War II. The stories of courage, commitment, love and hope. I cannot begin to imagine the undeserved suffering millions of Jews experienced simply because of their faith. "Why?"

Viktor Frankl, in his 1946 book, Man's Search for Meaning, described how he worked thru the "why?" and found life. Frankl was a Jewish psychiatrist in Vienna who was rounded up in 1942 by the Nazis and sent to a ghetto and then to a series of concentration camps. His wife, mother, and brother died in the camps.

Frankl spent most of his time in camp laying tracks for railway lines. This was not his passion, or his dream. This is not what he would be doing if he were marching to the beat of his own drummer. But this was the life events assigned to him. And it became clear to him that what sort of person he would wind up being depended upon what sort of inner decision he would make in response to his circumstances (his undeserved suffering.)

"It did not really matter what we expected from life," he wrote, **"but rather what life expected from us."** We needed to stop asking the meaning of life, and instead think of ourselves as those who were being questioned by life---daily and hourly." Frankl concluded that fate (undeserved suffering) had put a moral task and an intellectual task before him. It had given him an assignment.

His moral task was to suffer well, to be worthy of his sufferings. He could not control how much he suffered, or whether or when he would end up in the gas chamber or as a corpse by the side of the road, but he could control his inner response to his suffering.

"One could make a victory of these experiences, **turning life into an inner triumph,**" Frankl realized.

One could struggle against the insults by asserting small acts of dignity, not necessarily to change your outer life or even your ultimate fate, but to **strengthen the beams and pillars of your inner structure.**

"Suffering had become a task on which we did not want to turn our backs." Frankl wrote.

Amid the grit and grime and the corpses **one could still rise upward:** "I called to the Lord from my narrow prison and he answered me in the freedom of space."

As Nietzsche observed, "He who has **a why to live for** can bear almost any how."

(info. about Frankl gained from David Brooks' book, The Road To Character)

There is no way for us to wrap our minds and hearts around what Frankl and millions of Jews experienced. However, there are some amazing truths we can take away and input into our "Whys" of dealing with our undeserved suffering.

- Don't ask what we can get from life but rather what is it God expects from us, from our lives.
- Turning undeserved suffering into inner triumph.
- Strengthening the inner beams and pillars of your life.
- No matter what we can still rise upward.
- Find the why to live for and you can bear any undeserved suffering.

These truths we find as we journey with Job.

Job was a prosperous farmer who had thousands of heads of livestock, a large family and many servants. He was a good man who tried to do good for others. Satan came before God and challenged God claiming that Job was trusting God only because he was wealthy and everything was going well for him. And so the underserved suffering began for Job. Satan tried driving the wedge between Job and God.

Through no fault of his own Job lost his family, wealth and health. Yet, Job maintained his trust in God. Job's wife told him to blame God, but Job suffered in silence.

Job's three friends told Job the answer to his "Why?" was some sin in his life. Job maintained his innocence. A younger friend tried his luck with Job.

For Job, the greatest trial was not the pain or the loss; it was not being able to understand why God allowed him to suffer.

Perhaps the greatest mystery of undeserved suffering is how it can bring a person into the presence of God.

Micah, the prophet, reminded the people of God that truth with these words of God:

"They don't know that this is the making of God's people, that they are wheat being threshed, gold being refined. On your feet, Daughter of Zion! Be threshed of chaff, be refined of dross." (Micah 4:12-13 MSG.)

The removal of the outer chaff, the burning away of impurities in our lives comes most often when we are asking the "Why?" It is often then we rise upward in turning to God and listening to Him.

Finally, God spoke and Job listened.

God spoke to Job in the "eye of the storm." (Job 40:off)

God confronts Job directly and challenged him with his own ideas on undeserved suffering. Job confessed of how he talked too much and was now ready to listen to God.

God spoke to Job in the eye of the storm and asked Job all kinds of questions that spoke to God's creative power, presence and purpose.

We are in the hurricane season. Those of us who have been in a hurricane we get the "eye of the storm" presence. The eye of the hurricane is calm and peaceful. In fact, if the storm eye is so defined you can actually see blue sunny skies of hope. However, we know that the backside of the storm is still to come.

In the eye of the storm God spoke. Job listened.

Suffering calls our lives into question...not God's!

When the storms of undeserved suffering are swirling we need that "eye of the storm" time with God. We listen.

It is during the undeserved suffering storms that we can rise upward.

We find that happening with Job after the "eye of the storm" experience with God.

Job worships!

Job doesn't whine and whimper. He looks upward. He calls on God's power, presence and purpose in his undeserved suffering. Instead of asking God, "**why me?**" Job in a sense asked, "**What do you have to teach me, thresh or refine in me?**"

Job confessed his chaff and impurities. Job humbled himself before God in the midst of his undeserved suffering.

Job's repentance was not the kind called for by his friends. He did not ask for forgiveness for committing secret sins. Job's repentance was for questioning God's power, presence and purpose for Job in the midst of his undeserved suffering. Job repented of his attitude and acknowledged God's power, presence and purpose, even in his undeserved suffering. Job persevered. (James 5:10-11)

We sin when we angrily ask, "If God is in control, how could he let this happen to me?" We begin to believe we know ourselves better than the One who created us. We start telling God how to be God.

Listen...humble your heart before God...ask what is it God is wanting me to learn...how can I rise upward in this undeserved suffering? Take courage from Jesus' words that we will have undeserved suffering in this life, but take courage that He has overcome it all. (John 16:33)

Trust in the power, presence and purpose of God to make even undeserved suffering become a good in your life. (Romans 8:28)

The main question in the book of Job and in our lives is, "Why do believers experience troubles and undeserved suffering? Job's friends' advice made a big mistake, a serious error that Job's undeserved suffering was caused by sin. People make the same mistake today when they tell you or when you tell a friend that a sickness, an undeserved suffering, is because of some sin in your life or a lack of faith.

In our world, our imperfect world invaded by sin, undeserved suffering comes to the good and the bad, the believers and the unbelievers.

This does not mean that God is indifferent, distant, uncaring, unjust or powerless to protect. Undeserved suffering happens because we live in a fallen world. Sin entered. Satan continues to try to drive the wedge.

God doesn't cause the undeserved suffering...He allows it for a time. Although He will turn it for good to those who love him and call on him. He will restore to us His love and grace if we choose to rise upward. We can allow Him to make our undeserved suffering give us restored life, refined life in Jesus.

We may have no answers to why God allows evil but we do have the answer that God's power, presence and purpose is greater than any undeserved suffering we experience. Greater is He in us than any undeserved suffering wedge Satan may try to drive between us and God.

We can take hope and courage in the undeserved sufferings we go thru because God is ready to speak to us and guide and restore us. He will bring strength to our inner beams of life through Christ. There is no undeserved suffering that can ever separate us, drive a wedge between us and Christ Jesus.
(Romans 8:37-39)

Jesus is our "why" to live for, even in our undeserved sufferings of life.

Jesus is our "why" to live for, especially in our undeserved sufferings of life.