

The Fourth Friend

A

DANGEROUS

LOVE



Recap

When comfort and pleasure become the highest goals, we **avoid** anything that threatens these values

Has COVID-19 inadvertently **revealed** the depth of our faith to the world?

Recap

And what do you benefit if you **gain** the whole world but **lose** your own soul? **Mark 8:36**

the divine **exchange**

“I have held many things in my hands, and I have lost them all; but whatever I have placed in God's hands, **that I still possess.**”
Martin Luther

Recap

We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. **For we know how dearly God loves us**, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

Romans 5:3-5

Crisis can show us that our existing coping mechanisms are **not adequate** to deal with the **new** stressors

Part of what **religion** does is creates a way of **processing** suffering

Making Sense of Suffering, Mark Hart

Suffering does not make sense to this **modern world**. Not even the most scientifically astute minds or advanced mathematical theorems can explain the purpose of suffering. Science cannot give us an answer, so technology attempts to give us hundreds of ways to **avoid it**.

Where is God When it Hurts?, Graham Hill

The breadth of suffering in the world raises profound questions about the **nature** of God, and his **involvement** in human life. If God is all good, all-powerful, and all loving, then why do the innocent suffer? Neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament provide complete answers to this question. But some answers are given, and these ideas can be explored. The Bible teaches that we suffer largely because of the fallen, broken, wounded, sinful nature of humanity. **Sin has entered the world and brought death, disease, division, and destruction.**

Where is God When it Hurts?, Graham Hill

The Old Testament book of Job is one source that Christians and Jews turn to for explanations to human suffering and pain. Job is a **stunning ancient text**. It helps us engage with both the conceptual problems of suffering and the human, interpersonal, gut-level experiences. The misery of innocent, defenceless, and good people is a **very real dilemma**.

Where is God When it Hurts?, Graham Hill

In the book, Job is **never condemned for questioning God**. In desperate anguish he gropes for answers in the dark abyss of his misery. He laments his bitter feelings and grievous calamities. He cries to God for a response.

When **three** of Job's friends heard of the **tragedy he had suffered**, they got together and traveled from their homes to comfort and console him. Their names were Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. When they saw Job from a distance, they scarcely recognized him. Wailing loudly, they tore their robes and threw dust into the air over their heads to show their grief. Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and nights. **No one said a word to Job, for they saw that his suffering was too great for words.** Job 2:11-13

Worst Friends Ever

Cry for help, but will anyone answer you?
Which of the angels will help you? Surely
resentment destroys the fool, and jealousy
kills the simple. I have seen that **fools** may be
successful for the moment, but then comes
sudden disaster. Their **children** are abandoned
far from help; they are crushed in court with
no one to defend them. **5:1-4, Eliphaz**

Worst Friends Ever

How long will you go on like this? You sound like a blustering wind. Does God twist justice?

Does the Almighty twist what is right? Your children must have sinned against him, **so their punishment was well deserved.** 8:1-4, Bildad

Worst Friends Ever

Don't you realize that from the beginning of time, ever since people were first placed on the earth, the triumph of the wicked has been short lived and the joy of the godless has been only temporary? Though the pride of the **godless** reaches to the heavens and their heads touch the clouds, yet they will vanish forever, thrown away like their own **dung**. 20:4-7, Zophar

Worst Wife Ever

His wife said to him, “Are you still trying to maintain your integrity?
Curse God and die.” 2:9

Job's three friends refused to reply further to him because he kept insisting on his innocence. Job 32:1

Elihu had waited for the others to speak to Job because they were older than he. But when he saw that they had no further reply, he spoke out angrily. vs 4-5

Casual readers of Job barely notice **Elihu**. If they have the guts not to skip from chapter 2 to chapter 38, their eyes glaze over long before they meet Elihu in chapter 32. They sink in a bog of poetry; words swirl together into an indistinguishable mire, and Elihu comes and goes while readers are still gasping for air. **Some don't realize he's not one of the "three friends."** Peter Krol

God has not been silent; he speaks through your pain (Job 32-33)

For God is greater than any human being. So why are you bringing a charge against him?

Why say he does not respond to people's complaints? **For God speaks again and again, though people do not recognize it. 33:12-14**

Suffering reveals our hidden beliefs (Job 34)

Job speaks out of ignorance; his words lack insight.' Job, you deserve the maximum penalty for the wicked way you have talked. **For you have added rebellion to your sin;** you show no respect, and you speak many angry words against God. vs 35-37

God is Just, my pain does not explain or frame Him (Job 35)

People cry out when they are oppressed. They groan beneath the power of the mighty. **Yet they don't ask**, 'Where is God my Creator, the one who gives songs in the night? Where is the one who makes us smarter than the animals and wiser than the birds of the sky?' And when they cry out, God does not answer because of their pride. But it is wrong to say God doesn't listen, to say the Almighty isn't concerned. **9-13**

God is beyond our comprehension (Job 36-37).

So teach the rest of us what to say to God.

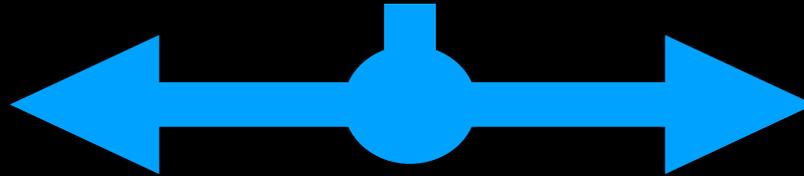
We are too ignorant to make our own arguments. Should God be notified that I want to speak? **Can people even speak when they are confused?** We cannot look at the sun, for it shines brightly in the sky when the wind clears away the clouds. So also, golden splendour comes from the mountain of God. He is clothed in dazzling splendour. We cannot imagine the power of the Almighty **37:19-23**

Though their conclusion is the same, their arguments are completely different. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar perpetually argue: “Before you began suffering, you must have sinned.” Elihu’s case is different: “**Since you began suffering, you have sinned.**” The three concern themselves with Job’s hidden conduct; Elihu concerns himself with **Job’s present speech.** Peter Krol

“Elihu, therefore, holds a **middle ground**, maintaining that God neither ‘takes away judgment,’ nor sends suffering merely as a punishment, but acts as the **educator** and teacher of mankind.” [Jewish Encyclopedia](#)

Pain/Suffering

Why me?



Why not me?

Underlying Presumptions

- this is not fair
- I don't deserve this
- I haven't caused this
- God is inflicting this therefore God doesn't love me

Underlying Presumptions

- I exist in a fallen world
- I did not cause this but I am also not sinless
- God exists in mystery
- God loves me and therefore walks with me through this

“Elihu is our “bridge” to Christ. His is a theological response that unites **justice** and **mercy** — not by conflating them, but by employing them as part of a **single grand plan**. His is a rejection of pure retribution and an embrace of prospective instrumentality, an exaltation of a God who is mighty, despises no one, and is firm in his purpose.” **Stan Rock**

For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet **they produce** for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! **2 Corinthians 4:17**

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