



Suffering and Faith Formation

A Study of the Book of Job



Job 30:15,16,20

Terrors overwhelm me;
my dignity is driven away as by the wind,
my safety vanishes like a cloud.

And now my life ebbs away;
days of suffering grip me.

I cry out to you, God, but you do not answer



“Oh Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not listen?”

“Why, O Lord, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?”

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”



Grieving the Unexpected

THE SUICIDE
OF A SON



DR. GARY LeBLANC



Dr. Gary LeBlanc



“Where is God?”

THE PROTEST

AND THE

silence

Suffering,
Death,
and Biblical
Theology

“The Protest and the Silence” by G. Tom Milazzo

- ▶ “Can we love a God that is silent in the presence of our death? Can we trust a God that does nothing to prevent our suffering? Whose justice is neither absolute nor perhaps even just? . . . What can it mean to have faith? Perhaps because the shadow of death calls into question not only our humanity but our faith in God as well, we cannot understand what it means to have faith in God apart from our concern for understanding what it means to be human, what it means to live in this world where all that is human decays in the presence of the silence of God.”



A. J. Gregory

- ▶ “Perhaps the greatest belief is believing when you don’t see any miracles, visions, or signs of tangible hope, but you are teeter-tottering on the ledge of utter unbelief. Belief in spite of the nothingness just might be where the greatest faith is found.”

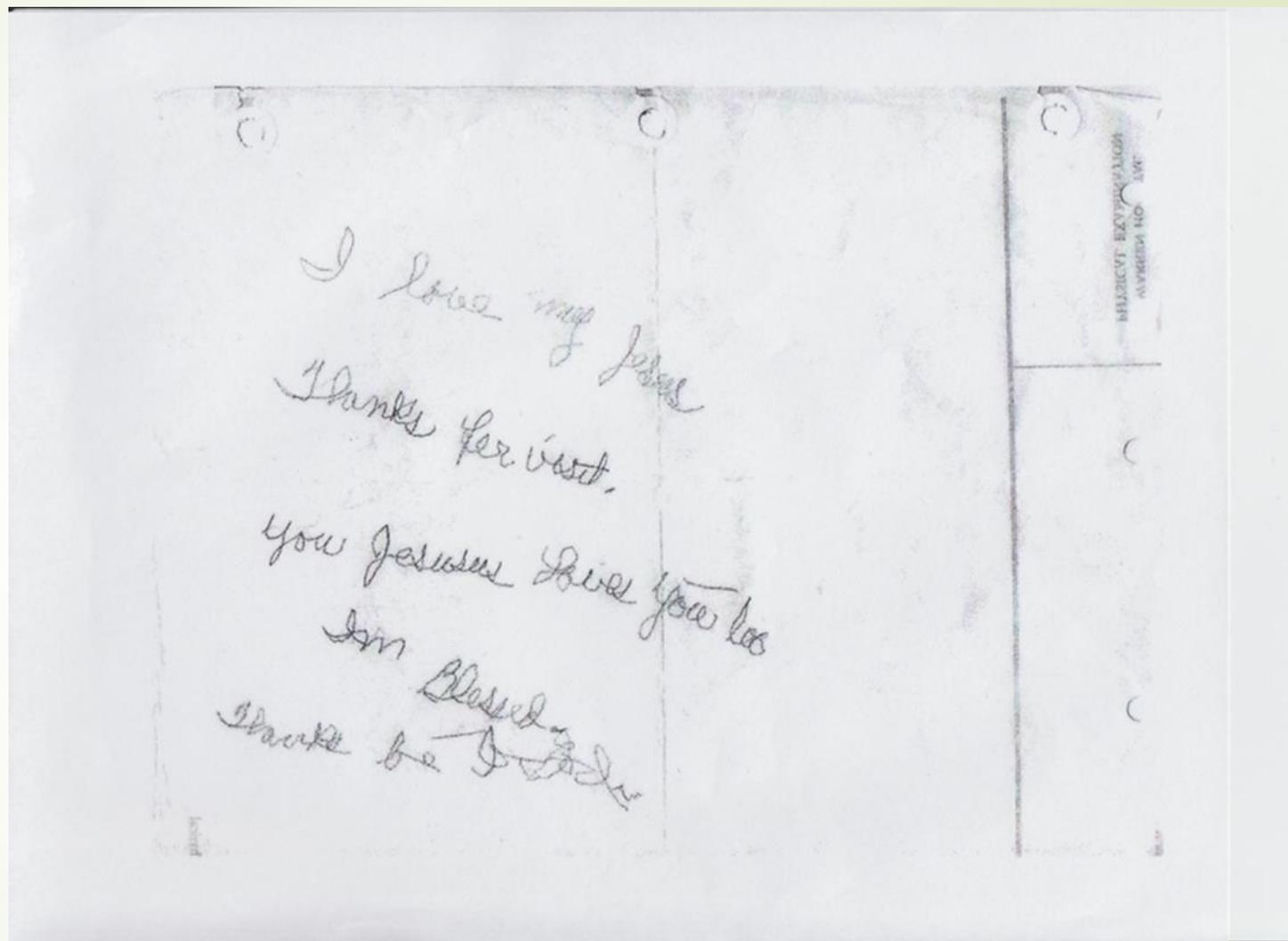
I believe in the sun even when it is not shining.

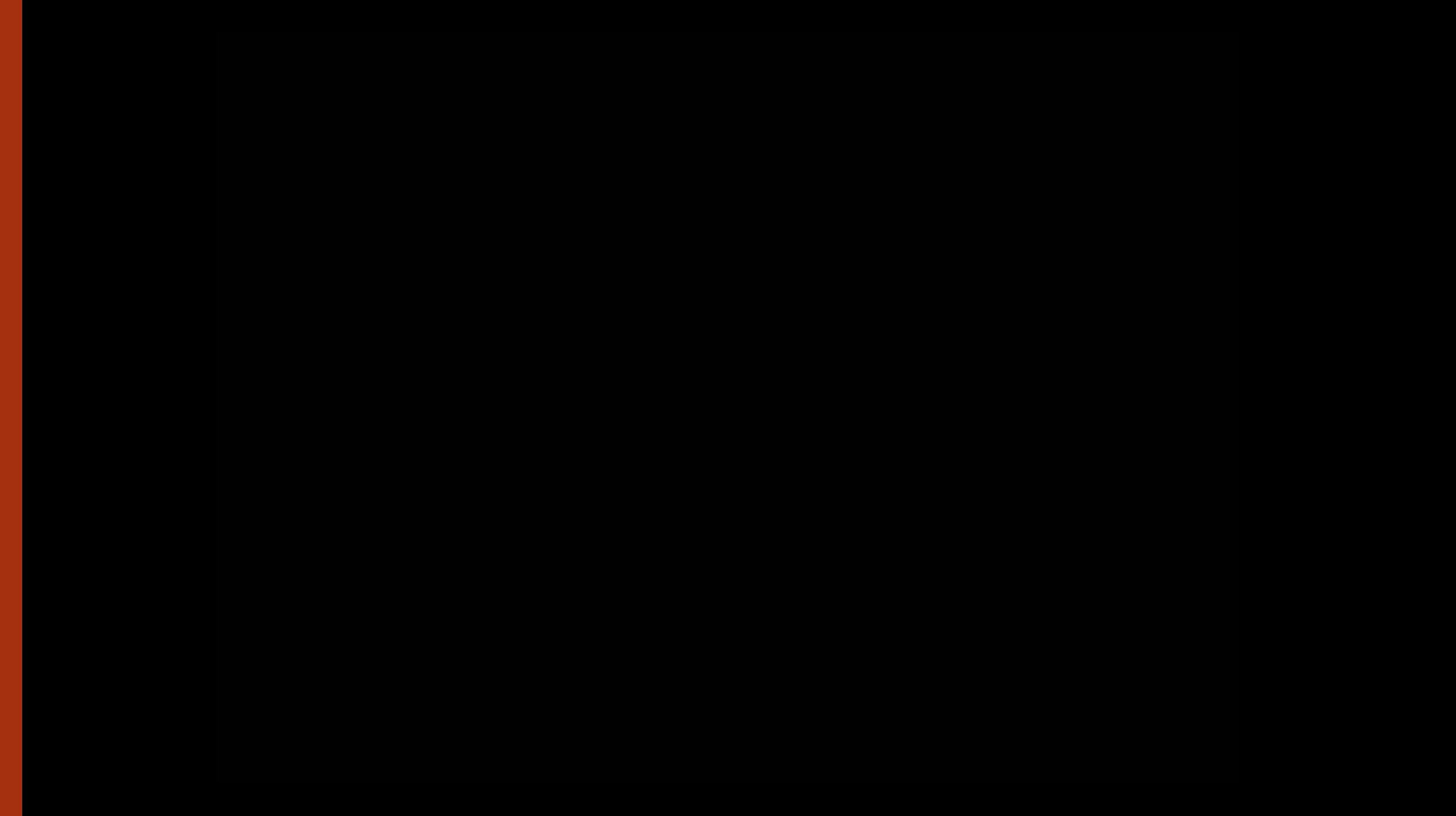
I believe in love even when feeling it not.

I believe in God even when he is silent.

(Inscription on a cellar wall in Germany where Jews hid from Nazis)

A story from Chris Hall





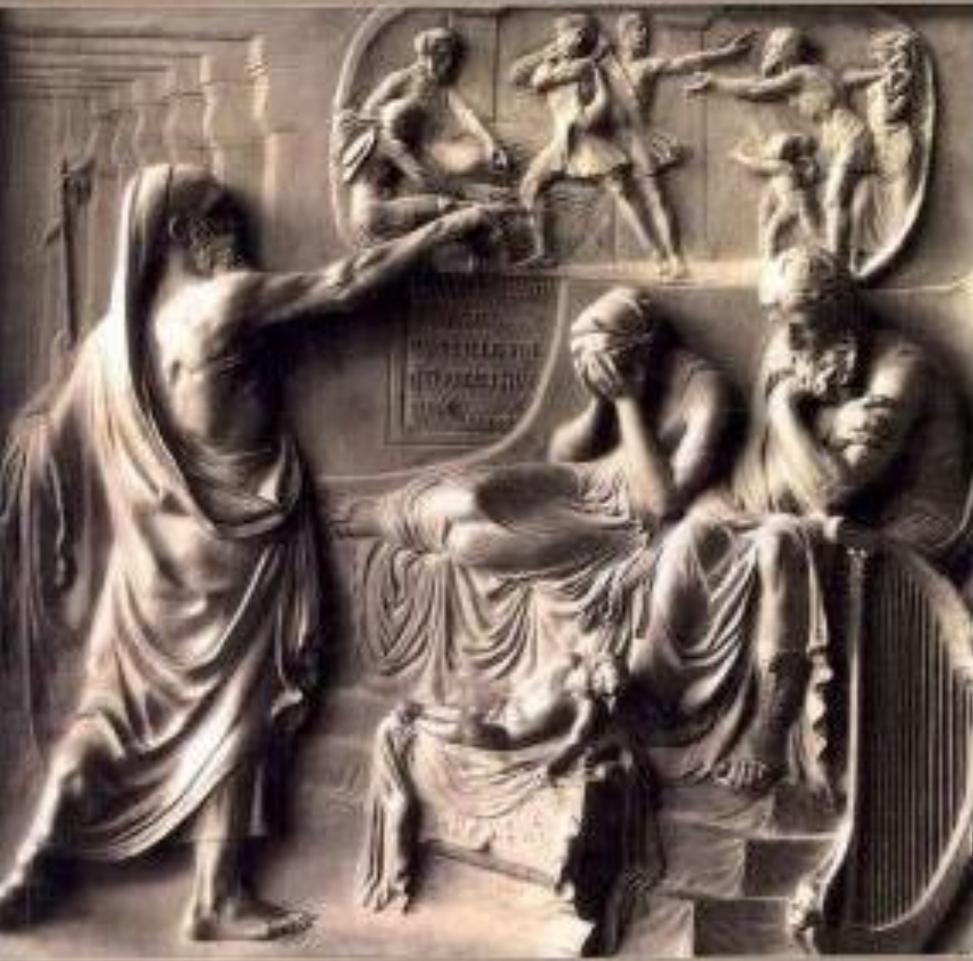


The Book of Job

- The subject of the book of Job is clearly suffering
- Job is the sufferer (all sorts of ills having come upon him both suddenly and inexplicably)
- Job is portrayed as believing he is an innocent sufferer (not believing he has sinned to an extent to bring this much suffering upon himself)
- **Question: *Why is Job suffering these misfortunes?***

WHERE is the GOD of JUSTICE?

THE OLD TESTAMENT AND SUFFERING



Michael E. W. Thompson

- ▶ “Although suffering may be the subject of this Old Testament book, it has to be said that in spite of all that is said within it, *the book as a whole does not come up with any single solution to the problem of suffering*. That is, it is not able to come up with one all-embracing theodicy.”



Five Common Explanations of Suffering (Phil Zylla)

- ▶ Suffering as punishment (Isaiah 3:10-11; Proverbs 12:21; Job 4:7-8)
- ▶ The resolved life in God's tapestry (1 Corinthians 13:12)
- ▶ Pedagogical suffering (Hebrews 12:11)
- ▶ Tragedy as a Test (James 1:2-4; 5:11)
- ▶ Suffering as a release from life (2 Corinthians 4:17-18)

Phil Zylla

- “The attempt to explain suffering – that is, the mindset that suggests that the key lies in finding the ‘correct’ explanation of all situations of suffering – is part of the problem in much of the Christian literature on suffering.”
- “Suffering is not a problem to be solved or a riddle to be explained, but rather it is a reality to be confronted in cooperation with God’s own expressed intentions in the world.”





Thomas Moore

- ▶ “You do a disservice to yourself when you treat your feelings of despair and emptiness as deviations from the normal and healthy life you idealize. The dark times, too, like enlightenments and achievements, leave their mark and make you a person of insight and passion.”
- ▶ “Many people think that the point of life is to solve their problems and be happy. But happiness is usually fleeting, and you never get rid of problems. Your purpose in life may be to become more who you are and more engaged with the people and life around you, to really live your life. That may sound obvious, yet many people spend their time avoiding life. They are afraid to let it flow through them, so their vitality gets channeled into ambitions, addictions, and preoccupations that don’t give them anything worth having. A dark night may appear, paradoxically, as a way to return to living. It pares life down to its essentials and helps you get a new start.”

It's ok to question

Addison Hodges Hart

- ▶ Melancholy and skepticism ('dark night of the soul') are not inimical to Christian faith.
- ▶ The way of the Christian faith is not only one of light, but also one of obscurity.
- ▶ To be completely devoid of melancholy in today's world is to be lacking something vital to common humanity
- ▶ Skepticism is the intellectual correlate of melancholy
- ▶ The Scriptures depict neither melancholy or skepticism as good or bad in themselves; rather they are to be morally judged in relation to their circumstances and use.

Knowing Darkness

On Skepticism,
Melancholy, Friendship,
and God



D. A. Carson – Six Pillars Providing a Framework for Understanding Suffering

- ▶ Insights from the beginning of the beginning of the Bible story line
 - ▶ Creation/fall
- ▶ Insights from the end of the Bible story line
 - ▶ Justice will be done and be seen to be done
- ▶ Insights from the place of innocent suffering
 - ▶ Correcting conventional piety
- ▶ Insights from the mystery of providence
 - ▶ God's sovereignty never mitigates human responsibility; this does not, however, make God contingent
- ▶ Insights from the centrality of Jesus
 - ▶ "Herein is love . . ."
- ▶ Insights from the persecuted global church
 - ▶ "Unless you take up your cross . . ."



Dorothee Soelle

- ▶ “Prayer is an all-encompassing act by which people transcend the mute God of an apathetically endured reality and go over to the speaking God of a reality experienced with feeling in pain and happiness. It was this God with whom Christ spoke in Gethsemane.”