

引言 INTRODUCTION

Suffering is one of the biggest obstacles that keeps people from believing in Jesus. Just this past weekend, there were some heartbreaking news — a shooting at a fast-food restaurant and an elderly driver running a red light and hitting several pedestrians. People were injured, and lives were lost. Moments like these make us ask, “How can a loving God allow such events?” Harold Kushner wrestled with the same question after the death of his son Aaron, who suffered from progeria, a rapid-aging disease. Aaron never grew beyond three feet tall, aged like an old man, and died as a teenager. Kushner wrote “When Bad Things Happen to Good People” out of deep sadness, grief, anger, and guilt. He tried to find meaning in suffering. He affirmed God’s love, but concluded that God cannot stop tragedies from happening. Those were his personal views. He was actually a Jewish rabbi. The Bible gives us different perspectives. Here are some truths Scripture teaches about suffering: Hardship can happen to anyone at any time. Satan can use suffering to attack us. We may never find a perfect answer, but God always has a purpose. God is still in control, even when life feels like it is falling apart. Perhaps you are facing some kind of suffering right now. My hope is that this message comforts you and strengthens your faith. Today, we will look at four biblical characters and see what we can learn from their experience.

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 持續的信心 Recurring Faith

The first person is Joseph in Genesis. Joseph’s life shows us a recurring faith. He kept believing in God even under hardships. Joseph was born to Jacob’s beloved wife and quickly became his father’s favorite. His ten older brothers grew jealous and hateful. One day, they sold Joseph to traveling merchants, who took him to Egypt as a slave. Yet God was with Joseph, and made him successful wherever he went. Joseph’s faith was tested when his master’s wife tried to seduce him. Joseph refused, but she falsely accused him, and he was thrown into prison. Joseph could have blamed God and grown bitter, but he held on to his recurring faith. In prison, Joseph met two officials who each had a strange dream. Joseph interpreted them correctly and begged the cupbearer to speak to Pharaoh on his behalf. But the man forgot. Joseph’s hope was dashed again. Two years later, Pharaoh had two troubling dreams — skinny cows eating fat cows, and weak grain swallowing healthy grain. None of the magicians could explain them. Suddenly the cupbearer remembered Joseph. Joseph was brought to the palace and told Pharaoh the meaning: seven years of abundance followed by seven years of severe famine. He advised Pharaoh to appoint someone to manage food storage. Pharaoh thought Joseph was the best candidate. Thus, a foreign prisoner became Egypt’s prime minister overnight. Everything happened exactly as God revealed. People from surrounding areas went to Egypt for food — including Joseph’s brothers. Joseph revealed his identity and later moved the entire family to Egypt. After Jacob died, the

brothers were afraid Joseph would finally get pay back. But Joseph comforted them in Genesis 50:20–21: 20 ... “You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. 21 So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.” ... Joseph saw how God turned their evil into blessing. If they had not betrayed him, he would not have gone to Egypt. If he had not been imprisoned and if God did not give those dreams, Joseph would not have risen to power. If there was no famine, the family would never have reunited. Joseph did not pretend the hardships were not real nor his suffering was easy. But he saw God fulfilling His plans. Perhaps you are in a trial right now. Like Joseph in prison, you may not see breakthrough yet. Do not give up. Bring your burdens to God. Ask Him for a recurring faith. Wait patiently for Him to lead you to the next step.

2. 更新信心 Reforming Faith

Besides Joseph, another classic figure we think of when suffering comes up is Job. Through Job’s story, we see a reforming faith — a faith that grows deeper through pain. Job was a wealthy man with ten children, thousands of animals and many servants. Then, he lost everything instantly. Most of the book records Job’s reflections and his debates with four men. They all insisted on one idea: “God blesses the obedient, so suffering must be His punishment. So, Job must repent.” But Job rejected their assumption. The book gives us a unique window into suffering. In chapter 1, God and Satan have a conversation. God praises Job for being upright. Satan argues that Job only obeys because he wants blessings. He claims that if Job loses everything, he will surely abandon his faith. God then made a deal with Satan in verse 12: ... “Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand.” ... All the disasters fell on Job, yet he remains faithful. Satan returns a second time and predicts Job will curse God if his health is attacked. God permits Satan to strike Job’s body but not take his life. Painful sores cover Job from head to toe. Even so, Job stays loyal to God. What can we learn from the story so far? Three truths stand out: God knows our hearts, and His judgment is always fair. Satan is an accuser who uses suffering to weaken our faith. No hardship comes to us without God’s permission. That is the prelude. What about the ending? Job is fed up with the accusations and he wants to present his case before God. God then appears. He speaks at length about His creation — the stars, the seas, the storms, and the animals. Then He asks Job a series of rapid-fire questions: “Where were you when I made all these?” “Do you understand how the world works?” “Who gives instincts to the animals?” God is not bullying Job with questions he cannot answer. He is redirecting Job’s attention away from his misery to the greatness of God. God is sovereign, wise and powerful. He is never absent and never out of control, even when we suffer. Job humbly admits that those things are too wonderful to comprehend. He concludes in 42:5-6: 5 “I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; 6 therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” Job stops asking why he suffers. There is no need. It is enough for him to know that God is there. His faith becomes a reforming faith — not “do good and God will treat you well,” but “do good even when the outcome is far from ideal.” There will be times when things do not make sense to you. Do not let confusion become your

conclusion, or let doubts turn into disbelief. Do not put your trust on the current situation. Rather, trust God who is sovereign over all circumstances.

3. 煉淨的信心 Refining Faith

The third person is the apostle Paul. His life shows us a refining faith — a faith purified and strengthened through suffering. Paul used to be a Bible scholar and a persecutor of Christians. He kept the Jewish Law and lived with a spotless moral conduct. But when God saved him, everything changed. Paul became a fearless fighter for the gospel. Despite all his success, Paul was no stranger to suffering. Listen to his words in 2 Corinthians 11:26 and 28: **26 On frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers. 28 And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.** Paul was one of those leaders who burned brightly for the Lord yet walked through intense pain. Many people would have quit. But Paul stayed faithful. God used Paul greatly — even giving him a special privilege. In chapter 12, Paul says he was once taken to heaven and heard things he was not allowed to share. Most people today would post photos online, write books and attract a lot of attention. But Paul got something else. Look at 12:7–9: **7 So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. 9 But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.** Paul never tells us what the “thorn in the flesh” was. He knew it came from Satan — just like Job’s suffering — with God’s permission. Paul also understood the purpose: to keep him humble after such a supernatural experience. But here is the key: God did not remove the thorn, even after Paul prayed three times. Instead, God gave him something more precious — sufficient grace. This teaches us that sometimes God has a reason for unanswered prayers. A lingering problem keeps us humble and reminds us how much we need God. Is there a thorn poking you? Maybe it is a chronic illness, an emotional scar, or the memory of a loved one you lost. It brings pain, tears, guilt or sleepless nights. The problem is real — but so is God. Next time the struggle returns, ask God for grace. His grace is unlimited and always available. Like Paul, you can experience God’s strength in your weakness. That helps you develop a refining faith. When you share how God helps you endure, your pain becomes a platform to display God’s glory.

4. 救贖的信心 Redeeming Faith

We have seen recurring faith in Joseph, reforming faith in Job, and refining faith in Paul. Now we come to the heart of the gospel — redeeming faith through Christ. Jesus is the perfect example of someone who willingly suffered to save others. His death on the cross was the very reason He came into the world. The innocent baby in the manger paved the way to an innocent victim. Jesus spoke many times about His coming death. In Mark 10:45, He

describes it as a payment: “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” The Bible teaches that we owe God a sin debt. Sin defiles God’s glory — like spilling ketchup or soy sauce on a brand-new shirt. The garment becomes imperfect, and only a strong detergent can remove the stain. In the same way, sin requires a price. The penalty is death. Only Jesus can pay that price for us. All who commit their sins to Him are washed clean by His blood. But the cross was not God’s backup plan. He had already decided to send His Son long before Adam and Eve sinned. Isaiah 53:6 says: All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Jesus is the ultimate Lamb of God who takes away sin. He knew this was His mission. On the surface, Jesus’ death looked like a wicked scheme by religious leaders to destroy Him. But in reality, it was God’s divine plan to reveal His love, mercy and grace. Jesus did not commit suicide, nor did He die as a martyr for His beliefs. He suffered voluntarily, offering Himself as a deliberate sacrifice. It was not an easy decision. He faced real struggle as He prayed in Luke 22:42: ... “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” The “cup” was the pain and shame of the cross. In the end, Jesus submitted to the Father’s plan. He suffered so that we could receive redeeming faith. All who trust in Him will be saved. He suffered so that we do not have to. Any loving parent understands this kind of sacrifice. It reminds me of something my mom did when I was in elementary school. One morning, heavy rain poured down the concrete stairs leading to my school like a waterfall. Without hesitation, my mom piggy-backed me all the way to the entrance. She was soaked so I could stay dry. It showed that love must come with sacrifice, whether it is time, resources or effort. You can sacrifice for non-believers too. It can be serving at a downtown shelter. It can be helping a stranger on the street. It can be welcoming newcomers. You show God’s love by caring for people’s needs. When you do that, you point them to Jesus — the source of redeeming faith.

結論 CONCLUSION

We have studied four expressions of faith — recurring, reforming, refining and redeeming. Which one describes the season of training you are going through now? No one volunteers for suffering, but the Bible shows that hardship is often the necessary tool God uses to mature our faith. It works much like purifying gold. After gold-rich ore is mined, it is heated to extreme temperatures — over 1,100°C — until it melts. Chemicals are added to bind with the impurities. The heavy, molten gold sinks to the bottom, while the waste material rises to the top and is removed. What remains is gold that is 80–95% pure. Further refining produces gold that is over 99% pure. Trials work the same way. When suffering hits, it can feel like we are inside a furnace. But God uses the heat to burn away our impurities — self-dependence, selfishness, pride, and self-pity. If we submit to Him, our faith grows stronger and purer. But if we resist His refining work, the heat will only scorch us and make us bitter. Therefore, when the fire comes, do not run from it — let God use it. The furnace that feels unbearable today will make your faith genuine. Trust the One who holds the fire. He will give you strength to stay in it, until He shapes you into a masterpiece for His glory.

引言 INTRODUCTION

苦難往往成為人們不願意信耶穌的障礙。就在上個週末，我們聽到一些令人難過的新聞——一家快餐店發生開槍事件，一位高齡的司機闖紅燈撞到幾名行人。有人受傷，也有人失去生命。我們不禁要問：「一位慈愛的神怎麼會允許這樣的事情發生？」哈羅德·庫什納 (Harold Kushner) 也曾經為這個問題掙扎。他的兒子亞倫患有早衰症，這是一種快速老化的疾病。亞倫的身高從未超過三英尺，他的外表像一位小老翁，最後在少年時期離世。庫什納在極度的悲傷、哀痛、憤怒和內疚中寫下了《當好人遭遇壞事》(When Bad Things Happen to Good People)。他試圖在苦難中尋找意義。他肯定神是慈愛的，但他也認為神無法阻止悲劇的發生——這是他個人的見解。他其實是一個猶太人的拉比。聖經卻給我們不同的觀點。以下是一些聖經的真理：苦難隨時可能臨到任何人。撒但會利用苦難攻擊我們。我們可能找不到完美的答案，但神始終有祂的目的。縱使生命看起來失控，但神仍然掌權。也許你正面對某種苦難。我盼望這段信息能安慰你、堅固你的信心。今天，我們將一起看四位聖經人物，從他們的經歷中學習屬靈的功課。

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 持續的信心 Recurring Faith

第一位人物是創世記中的約瑟。他展示出持續的信心。就算在苦難中，他仍然堅持相信神。約瑟是雅各最愛的妻子所生的，因而成為父親的寵兒。他的十位哥哥因此嫉妒又討厭他。有一天，他們把約瑟賣給路過的商人，商人把他帶到埃及當奴隸。然而，神與約瑟同在，使他無論在哪裡都凡事順利。不久之後，約瑟的信心再次受試驗：主人的太太引誘他。約瑟拒絕，但那位女士反而誣告他，使他被關進監獄。約瑟本可以埋怨神、心裡充滿苦毒，但他仍然抓住那份持續的信心。在監獄裡，約瑟遇到兩位官員，他們各自做了奇怪的夢。約瑟為他們解夢，並請酒政出獄後替他向法老求情，但酒政忘了他。約瑟的希望再度破滅。兩年後，法老做了兩個令人不安的夢——瘦牛吃掉肥牛，枯萎的穀物吞掉飽滿的穀物。所有術士都無法解釋。酒政這才想起約瑟。於是約瑟被帶到王宮，向法老解釋夢的意思：七年豐收之後，將有七年嚴重饑荒。他建議法老派一個人管理儲存糧食。法老認為約瑟是最理想的人選。就這樣，一位外國囚犯馬上成了埃及的宰相。事情完全按照神所啟示的發生。周圍各地的人都到埃及買糧食，包括約瑟的哥哥們。約瑟向他們表明身分，後來也把整個家族接到埃及居住。雅各去世後，哥哥們擔心約瑟會報復。但約瑟安慰他們，他在創世記 50:20-21 說：**20「從前你們的意思是要害我，但神的意思原是好**

的，要保全許多人的性命，成就今日的光景。**21** 現在你們不要害怕，我必養活你們和你們的婦人孩子。」... 約瑟看見神如何把人的詭計變為祝福：若哥哥們沒有出賣他，他就不會到埃及。若他沒有坐牢，若沒有神所賜的夢，他就不可能做官。若沒有饑荒，他們一家就不會再相見。約瑟沒有否認苦難的真實，也沒有假裝受苦很輕鬆，但他看見神的計畫如何進行。也許你現在正處在試煉之中。像約瑟在監獄裡時，你可能還看不到突破。不要放棄。把你的重擔交給神，求祂賜你一份持續的信心，耐心等候神帶領你的下一步。

2. 更新的信心 Reforming Faith

除了約瑟之外，另一個我們一想到苦難就會記起的經典人物是約伯。從約伯的故事中，我們看見一份更新的信心——一種在痛苦中變得更深的信心。約伯是一個富翁，有十個孩子、成千上萬的牲畜和許多僕人。但他在一瞬間失去了一切。整卷書的大部分內容記錄了約伯的反思，以及他與四位朋友的辯論。他們都堅持同一個觀點：「神賜福給順服祂的人，所以苦難一定是祂的懲罰。因此約伯必須悔改。」但約伯拒絕了他們的假設。這卷書給我們一個獨特的角度來看苦難。在第一章，神與撒但有一段對話。神稱讚約伯正直。撒但卻認為約伯之所以順服，只是因為他想要神的祝福。他說如果約伯失去一切，他一定會放棄信仰。於是神在第 12 節允許撒但試探約伯：**...「凡他所有的都在你手中；只是不可伸手加害於他。」...**結果所有災難都臨到約伯，但他仍然對神忠心。後來撒但第二次來到神面前，聲稱如果約伯的身體受苦，他必定咒詛神。神允許撒但攻擊約伯的身體，但不可以取他的性命。結果約伯從頭到腳長滿了毒瘡。然而，他保持對神忠心。到目前為止，我們能從這段故事學到什麼呢？有三個清楚的真理：神知道我們的心意，祂的判斷必然公平。撒但是控告者，他會利用苦難減弱我們的信心。如果沒有神的允許，任何苦難不會臨到我們。這是故事的序幕，那結局呢？約伯厭倦了四位朋友的指控，他希望直接向神申訴。於是神便顯現，並詳細談論祂的創造——星辰、海洋、風暴、動物。接著神向約伯問了一連串的問題：「我創造這一切時，你在哪裡？」「你知道世界如何運作嗎？」「是誰賜給動物生存的本能？」神不是用約伯無法回答的問題來壓他，而是要約伯把視線從自己的痛苦轉向神的偉大。神有主權、充滿智慧、而且全能；在我們受苦的時候，祂從沒有離開，也從未失控。約伯謙卑地承認這些事太奇妙，他無法理解。他在 42:5-6 中總結說：**5「我從前風聞有你，現在親眼看見你。6 因此我厭惡自己，在塵土和爐灰中懊悔。」**約伯不再問「為什麼我受苦」。他不需要答案，他知道神仍然在那裡就足夠了。他的信心成為一種更新的信心——不只是「行善就會得到神的祝福」，而是「就算結果不理想，也繼續行善」。有些時候，你也會遇到不明白的事。不要讓困惑變成你的結論，也不要因疑惑失去信心。不要把信心放在眼前的處境上，而要信靠那位在一切環境之中掌權的神。

3. 煉淨的信心 Refining Faith

第三位我們要看的，是使徒保羅。他的生命彰顯出煉淨的信心——一種在痛苦中被提煉、被堅固的信心。保羅原本是聖經學者，也是逼迫基督徒的人。他遵守猶太律法，生活上無可指摘。但當神拯救他時，他的生命徹底翻轉，成為一位勇敢的福音戰士。儘管保羅有許多成就，他對苦難並不陌生。聽聽他在哥林多後書 11:26 和 28 節的分享：**26 又屢次行遠路，遭江河的危險、盜賊的危險，同族的危險、外邦人的危險、城裡的危險、曠野的危險、海中的危險、假弟兄的危險。28 除了這外面的事，還有為眾教會掛心的事，天天壓在我身上。**保羅是那種為主火熱但卻經歷極大痛苦的領袖。許多人可能早就放棄了，但保羅保持忠心。神大大使用保羅，甚至給他一次特別的經歷。在第 12 章，保羅說他曾被提到天堂，聽見一些不能向人述說的事。若是今天，多數人可能會拍照、寫書，吸引大眾的注意。但保羅得到不一樣的結果。看哥林多後書 12:7-9：**7 又恐怕我因所得的啟示甚大，就過於自高，所以有一根刺加在我肉體上，就是撒但的差役要攻擊我，免得我過於自高。8 為這事，我三次求過主，叫這刺離開我。9 他對我說：「我的恩典夠你用的，因為我的能力是在人的軟弱上顯得完全。」**所以，我更喜歡誇自己的軟弱，好叫基督的能力覆庇我。保羅沒有告訴我們那根「刺」是什麼。他知道那是撒但的攻擊——就像約伯的苦難——是神允許的。保羅也明白這苦難的目的：讓他在超自然的經歷後仍保持謙卑。但重點在這裡：雖然保羅三次祈求，神並沒有挪去那根刺。神反而給他更寶貴的東西——足夠的恩典。這教導我們：有時候神沒有回應我們的禱告，是有原因的。持續的困難讓我們保持謙卑，也提醒我們多麼需要神。你生命中是否也有一根刺？也許是慢性疾病、情感創傷、或失去親人的難過。這個問題帶給你眼淚、內疚、痛苦或失眠。問題是真實的——但神也同樣真實。下次痛苦再次浮現時，求神賜你恩典。祂有無限的恩典，而且隨時供應。像保羅一樣，你能在軟弱中經歷神的能力，讓你的信心被煉淨。當你分享神如何幫助你承受苦難時，你的痛苦就成了展示神榮耀的平台。

4. 救贖的信心 Redeeming Faith

我們在約瑟身上看見持續的信心，在約伯身上看見更新的信心，在保羅身上看見被煉淨的信心。現在，我們來到福音的核心——藉著基督而得的救贖的信心。耶穌是最完美的榜樣，祂甘願受苦來拯救人。祂來到世上的主要目的，就是要死在十字架上。馬槽裡那位單純的嬰孩，後來成為無辜的受害者。耶穌多次預告祂的受死。在馬可福音 10:45，祂把自己的死形容為一筆贖價：**「因為人子來，並不是要受人的服事，乃是要服事人，並且要捨命作多人的贖價。」**聖經教導我們，人因為犯罪彷彿欠了神一筆債。罪玷污了神的榮耀——就像番茄醬或醬油灑在一件全新的衣服上。衣服變得不完美，必須用清潔劑把污漬洗掉。同樣，罪的虧欠必須償還，而代價就是死亡。唯有耶穌能替我們付上這筆代價。凡把自己的罪交給祂的人，都被祂的寶血洗淨。但十字架並不是神的後備計畫。早在亞當和夏娃犯罪之前，神就已決

定要差祂的兒子來。以賽亞書 53:6 說：我們都如羊走迷；各人偏行己路；耶和華使我們眾人的罪孽都歸在他身上。耶穌是神終極的羔羊，除去世人的罪孽。祂深知這是祂的使命。表面上來看，耶穌的死像是宗教領袖的陰謀，要除掉他們的眼中釘。但實際上，耶穌的死是神的計畫，要彰顯祂的愛、憐憫與恩典。耶穌不是自殺，也不是為信仰殉道。祂是甘願受苦，犧牲自己。這絕對不是一個輕鬆的決定。祂在路加福音 22:42 的禱告中有真實的掙扎：...「父啊！你若願意，就把這杯撤去；然而，不要成就我的意思，只要成就你的意思。」那個「杯」是指十字架的痛苦與羞辱。最終，耶穌順服了天父的旨意。祂受苦，是為了讓我們得著救贖的信心。凡信靠祂的人都必得救。祂受苦，使我們不必承受那苦。任何愛兒女的父母都能體會這種犧牲。這讓我想起小學時母親為我做的一件事。有一天早上下大雨，雨水像瀑布一樣從通往學校的樓梯沖下來。媽媽毫不猶豫地背起我，一路背到校門口。她全身濕透，讓我不用淋雨。這顯示愛必然帶有犧牲——時間、資源、努力。你也可以為非信徒付出。你可以去市中心服事無家可歸的人。你可以幫助路上的陌生人。你可以熱情地歡迎新朋友。你藉著關心別人的需要來顯示神的愛。當你這樣做之時，你正在把人指向耶穌——那位賜下救贖的主。

結論 CONCLUSION

今天我們討論了四種信心的表現——持續的信心、更新的信心、煉淨的信心、救贖的信心。那麼，哪一種最貼近你目前所經歷的操練呢？沒有人主動尋求苦難，但聖經告訴我們，困難往往是神用來成熟我們信心的必要工具。這個過程很像提煉黃金。金礦石被開採後，會被加熱到超過攝氏 1,100 度的高溫，礦石便會融化。接著加入化學物質，使雜質與之結合。比較重的金會沉到底下，比較輕的雜質會浮在表面並被除去。剩下的金已經有 80-95% 的純度，再經過進一步提煉，就能達到 99% 以上的純金。試煉也是如此。當苦難臨到時，我們彷彿被放進火爐裡。但神使用這火來燒掉我們生命中的雜質——單靠自己、自私、驕傲、自憐。如果我們順服神，我們的信心就會變得更堅強、更純淨；但如果我們抗拒神的提煉，同樣的火只會灼傷我們，使我們變得苦毒。因此，當火臨到時，不要逃避——讓神使用它。今天看似難以承受的火爐，正是使你的信心變得更真實的過程。信靠那位控制火的主，祂會給你力量承受，直到祂把你塑造成為反映祂榮耀的傑作。