

OUR
ULTIMATE
REFUGE

OUR ULTIMATE REFUGE

Formerly Titled Baffled to Fight Better

JOB AND THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING



OSWALD CHAMBERS

AUTHOR OF MY UTMOST FOR HIS HIGHEST



Discovery House Publishers

Books, music, and videos that feed the soul with the Word of God

Box 2766 Grand Rapids, MI 49501

© 2006, 1990, 1931 by Oswald Chambers Publications Association.
First published in 1917
All rights reserved.

Discovery House Publishers is affiliated with RBC Ministries,
Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Discovery House books are distributed to the trade exclusively by
Barbour Publishing, Inc., Uhrichsville, Ohio.

Requests for permission to quote from this book should be directed to:
Permissions Department, Discovery House Publishers,
P.O. Box 3566, Grand Rapids, MI 49501.

Scripture quotations are from the King James Version.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Chambers, Oswald, 1874-1917.

[Baffled to fight better]

Our ultimate refuge : Job and the problem of suffering /
Oswald Chambers.

p. cm.

Originally published: Grand Rapids, MI : Discovery House
Publishers, [1997], c1990.

ISBN 1-57293-198-1

1. Bible. O.T. Job--Criticism, interpretation, etc. 2. Bible. O.T.
Job--Devotional literature. 3. Suffering--Biblical teaching.

4. Suffering--Religious aspects--Christianity. I. Title.

BS1415.52.C53 2006

223'.107--dc22

2006014377

Printed in the United States of America

06 07 08 09 / / 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents

<i>Publisher's Foreword</i>	6
<i>Foreword</i> to the First Edition (1917)	8
<i>Foreword</i> to the Third Edition (1924)	10
<i>Foreword</i> from the Reprinted Edition (1947)	11
The Unseen Universe	13
Dazed and Amazed	18
The Passion of Pessimism	24
The Light That Failed	29
Out of the Depths	35
More Questions Than Answers	41
Agnosticism	49
Pretension	57
On the Trail	62
Much Ado About Nothing	69
The Frontiers of Despair	75
The Bitterest Hurt in Life	83
The Primal Clash	90
Parables	99
The Passion for Authority	108
The Passion for Reality	118
Locks vs. Keys	124
Disguise of the Actual	131
Notes	139

Publisher's Foreword

The well-known author of *My Utmost for His Highest* takes a very honest look at the book of Job and discovers the essence of the issue which has plagued mankind for centuries: "Why do the righteous suffer?" The problem of pain is an ancient one yet never more real than when faced by those of us living in the twenty-first century. All of the comforts of modern gadgetry have not dispelled the pain of our fallenness.

Chambers presents God as not only the *ultimate* refuge, but our *only* refuge. With characteristic insight he discusses our myths of self-sufficiency and eternal optimism, revealing their inadequacy when faced with the destruction of all that human-kind values. Only with that sense of ultimate and utter loss do we come to admit that all we have is God.

The author does not approach his study of Job systematically. He does not dissect its theology or organize its doctrines. Rather, he analyzes its chronological development from Satan's challenge in the early chapters to the final climax of Job's restoration. He recognizes that in the fidelity of Job's despair there was hope because "Job was seeing God, for the first time in his life, as the only refuge. We know nothing about redemption or forgiveness until we crave for it." In the extremes of his life Job found that God was enough.

It is the publisher's hope that this new edition of *Our Ultimate Refuge* will bring hope and encouragement to you who are

in the midst of hurt and suffering. May you also, in your perplexities over the seeming injustices of life, learn to fight better.

—THE PUBLISHER

Foreword to the First Edition (1917)

This book is comprised of talks given nightly by Reverend Oswald Chambers to the men at the Imperial School of Instruction,¹ Zeitoun, Egypt, during the spring of 1917.

The one who spoke the words is now in the presence of the King, “serving Him day and night in His temple,” and our prayer is that this book may serve to quicken in us all “a personal passionate devotion to Jesus Christ.” Our Lord Himself was the one Lodestar in the life of my husband, and every recalling of him is an incentive to “follow his ways in Christ.”

For himself

So shadowed forth in every look and act

Our Lord, without Whose name he seldom spoke,

One could not live beside him and forget.

B.C.²

EGYPT, 1917

Central Hall, Westminster, London, S.W.

It is with sincere pleasure that I write a few prefatory words to this last message from Reverend Oswald Chambers.

The Church of Christ has sustained a great loss in the Passing of our dear gifted Friend.

Reverend Oswald Chambers was a scholar, a burning Evangelist, a teacher of the Word of God, who taught in faith and verity.

He was full of the Holy Ghost, and turned many to the Lord. There is pathetic interest in these musings on the great drama of sorrow, which was also a true history.

Many will read them with tearful eyes as they recall their departed Author.

All, I am sure, will read with profit: may our Friend's lessons be messages of God to us all.

May we live in full consecration as he did, and whether we "fall asleep in Jesus," or remain till the Lord's return, may we be absolutely faithful!

—DINSDALE T. YOUNG³

Foreword to the Third Edition (1924)

These talks were given in the Y.M.C.A. Huts, Zeitoun, Egypt,⁴ to the men in the Egyptian Expeditionary Force during the early part of 1917. They were not given with the thought of publication, and the book is compiled from my own verbatim notes.

In November, 1917, God's call came to my husband for other service in His presence, and the idea came to me that to publish the talks he had been giving to the men in Egypt (and previously at the Bible Training College, London), would serve some purpose of God's, and the work was started with the prayer that the written messages might bring a knowledge of His truth to many as the spoken messages had ever done. This book was the first one to be published and was widely circulated amongst the men in Egypt and Palestine, many of whom had heard the talks given, an edition being also published in England at the same time.

I have a practically inexhaustible supply of notes, and other books will be published from time to time.

*By his faith, he is speaking to us still. (Hebrews 11:4,
MOFFATT).*

—B.C.

200 WOODSTOCK ROAD, OXFORD

OCTOBER 1923

Foreword from the Reprinted Edition (1947)

These talks on Job by Oswald Chambers were given in the Y.M.C.A Hut Zeitoun Camp, Egypt in 1916. Night by night the men gathered, first to scan the chalked outlines on the blackboard, and then to take notes as the speaker gave a straightforward message within the scope of the headlines. So within about a month the whole book of Job was brought under review. It was with no thought of publication that Mrs. Chambers made a verbatim record of the lectures, but when the next year her husband passed from the earthly sphere, there was at hand material for the first edition of this book. In that and succeeding editions it has brought much light to many who have been faced with the tragic basis of our human life. Its message is as appropriate for this stage of the Second World War as it was for the First World War of this century. It sheds light on the abiding problems of pain, but above all it brings into view our Redeemer, and we too, like Job, may come to see the end purpose of the Lord that He is full of pity and merciful.

—DAVID LAMBERT

The Unseen Universe

JOB 1:1–12

*Man is not God but hath God's end to serve,
A master to obey, a course to take,
Somewhat to cast off, somewhat to become.
Grant this, then man must pass from old to new,
From vain to real, from mistake to fact,
From what once seemed good, to what now proves best.*

—ROBERT BROWNING

The Record of the Natural (Job 1:1–5)

The Greatest Man in the East

His Goodness (v. 1)
His Grandeur (vv. 2–4)
His Graciousness (v. 5)

The Record of the Supernatural (Job 1:6–12)

The Scenery Behind the Seen

Sons of God (v. 6)
Satan and God (vv. 7–8)
Satanic Sneer About God (vv. 9–12)

It is in such a book as Job that many suffering souls will find consolation and sustaining, and this because no attempt is made to explain the *why* of suffering, but rather an expression is given to suffering which leaves one with the inspiration of an explanation in the final issue. The problem in connection with

suffering arises from the fact that there is seemingly no explanation of it.

To say that Job was perfected by means of his sufferings is begging the question, for Job was perfect in moral and religious equipment before suffering touched his life. "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that . . . escheweth evil?" (Job 1:8). Job suffered "according to the will of God" (1 Peter 4:9); he never knew the preface to his story.

Verses 6–12 are a record of the supernatural; there is nothing familiar to our minds in them. The Bible deals with what no ordinary mind sees—the scenery behind the things that are seen. We have means of inferring the existence of a supernatural world only when it interferes with us. These verses refer to something that happened in the supernatural world, and it is what happened there that accounts for Job's sufferings; therefore the upset which came into the life of this great and good man is not to be laid to his account.

There is a difference between Satan and the devil which the Bible student should note. According to the Bible, man is responsible for the introduction of Satan: Satan is the result of a communication set up between man and the devil (see Genesis 3:1–5). When Jesus Christ came face to face with Satan He dealt with him as representing the attitude man takes up in organizing his life apart from any consideration of God. In the wilderness temptation the devil is seen in his undisguised character; only once did our Lord address the devil as "Satan"—"Then said Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan. . . ." (Matthew 4:10). On another occasion Jesus said that self-pity was satanic—"But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan. . . ." (Matthew 16:23).

The devil is the satanic adversary of God in the rule of man and Satan is his representative. Because a thing is satanic does not necessarily mean that it is abominable and immoral; our Lord said that “that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15). Satan rules this world under the inspiration of the devil and men are peaceful, “when a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace” (Luke 11:21), there is no breaking out into sin and wrongdoing. One of the most cunning travesties is to represent Satan as the instigator of external sins. The satanically-managed man is often moral, upright, proud, and individual; he is absolutely self-governed and has no need of God.

Satan counterfeits the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit represents the working of God in a human life when it is at one with God through the redemption; in other words, “Holy Spirit” is the heredity brought into human nature at regeneration. When a man is born from above he has granted to him the disposition of Jesus, *Holy Spirit*, and if he obeys that disposition he will develop into the new manhood in Christ Jesus. If by deliberate refusal a man is not born again he is liable to find himself developing more and more into the satanic, which will ultimately head up into the devil.

“Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?” (Job 1:9). Verses 9–12 might be paraphrased in this way: Satan is represented as saying to God, “You are infatuated with the idea that man loves You for Your own sake; he never has and never will. Job, for instance, simply loves you because You bless and prosper him, but touch any one of his blessings and he will curse You to Your face and prove that no man on earth loves You for Your own sake.”

It must be remembered what Job’s creed was. Job believed that God prospered and blessed the upright man who trusted in

Him, and that the man who was not upright was not prospered. Then came calamity after calamity, everything Job believed about God was contradicted and his creed went to the winds. Satan's sneer is the counterpart of the devil's sneer in Genesis 3; there, the devil's object is to sneer about God to man; here, Satan's object is to sneer about man to God, he is "the accuser of our brethren" (Revelation 12:10).

Today there is in our midst a crop of juvenile skeptics, men who up to the time of the war⁵ had had no tension in their lives, and as soon as turmoil embroiled them they flung over their faith and became cheap and easy skeptics. The man who knows that there are problems and difficulties in life is not so easily moved. Most of us get touchy with God and desert Him when He does not back up our creed (see John 6:60, 66). Many a man through this war has lost his form of belief in God and imagines that he has thereby lost God, whereas he is in the throes of a conflict which ought to give birth to a realization of God more fundamental than any statement of belief.

There are things in our heavenly Father's dealings with us which have no immediate explanation. There are inexplicable providences which test us to the limit, and prove that rationalism is a mere mental pose. The Bible and our common sense agree that the basis of human life is tragic, not rational, and the whole problem is focused for us in this book of Job. Job 13:15 is the utterance of a man who has lost his explicit hold on God, but not his implicit hold, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." That is the last reach of the faith of a man. Job's creed is gone; all he believed about God has been disproved by his own experiences, and his friends when they come, say in effect, "You are a hypocrite, Job, we can prove it from your own creed." But Job sticks to it, "I am not a hypocrite, I do not know what accounts

for all that has happened, but I will hold to it that God is just and that I shall yet see Him vindicated in it all.”

God never once makes His way clear to Job. Job struggles with problem after problem, and providence brings more problems all the time, and in the end Job says, “. . . now mine eye seeth thee” (Job 42:5): all he had hung on to in the darkness was true, and that God was all he had believed Him to be, loving and just, and honorable. The explanation of the whole thing lies in the fact that God and Satan had made a battleground of Job’s soul without Job’s permission. Without any warning, Job’s life is suddenly turned into desperate havoc and God keeps out of sight and never gives any sign whatever to Job that He *is*. The odds are desperately against God and it looks as if the sneer of Satan will prove to be true; but God wins in the end, Job comes out triumphant in his faith in God, and Satan is completely vanquished.

Will I trust the revelation given of God by Jesus Christ when everything in my personal experience flatly contradicts it?