

# A Christian response to suffering

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[ 0 : 00 ] Amen. All right, very good. If you have your Bibles, please turn with me to Job chapter 2.

! Job chapter 2, we're going to be looking at verses 1 to 10 this morning.! Job, you can find that just before the book of Psalms. Chapter 2.

Have you ever asked yourself the question, why do bad things happen to good people? That's a question for the ages, isn't it? And this passage shed some light on at least a small part of that answer.

Now, certainly not at all times, but sometimes those hardships can be a test of our faith. And here we see the patriarch Job put through one such agonizing test.

And how did he fare? Well, let's see, shall we? Job chapter 2, beginning with verse 1. One day the members of the heavenly court, I have a different translation up there.

[ 1 : 01 ] Let's use that one. On another day, the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them to present himself before him. And the Lord said to Satan, Where have you come from? And Satan answered the Lord, From roaming throughout the earth, going to and fro on it.

Then the Lord said to Satan, Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him. He is blameless and upright, A man who fears God, And shuns evil.

And he still maintains his integrity, Though you incited me against him, To ruin him without any reason. Skin for skin, Satan replied, A man will give all he has for his own life. But now stretch out your hand, And strike his flesh and bones, And he will surely curse you to your face.

And the Lord said to Satan, Very well then, he is in your hands, But you must spare his life. So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord, And afflicted Job, With painful sores from the soles of his feet, To the crown of his head.

Then Job took a piece of broken pottery, And scraped himself with it, As he sat among the ashes. His wife said to him, Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die.

[ 2 : 08 ] He replied, You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God and not trouble? In all this, Job did not sin in what he said. Amen. Thus far the reading of God's word, The grass withers and the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.

Let's pray. Holy Spirit, once again, We humble ourselves before you, Before your word. We ask, Lord, That you would speak mightily through it. That, Lord, we would be edified in our faith, And that you would be glorified.

And all that is said and done, We pray for the sake of Christ our Lord. Amen. Amen. Amen. You know, It's hard not to notice The weather is turning here in Edinburgh.

Spring is upon us, And spring brings us to wedding season. Do you have wedding season in Scotland? At least we have that in the States. And you know, One of the happiest days of a person's life Is usually the day they get married.

I mean, Who can resist rejoicing When two young people in love Come together before friends and family And loved one in the church To pledge their undying loyalty And affection to each other.

[ 3 : 14 ] They get all dressed up With the men in their sharp-looking tuxedos And the bride in her stunning white gown. And the groom waits for his bride At the center aisle.

And they make solemn vows before God. Usually those vows sound something like this. I, Prince Charming, Take you, Fairy Princess, And, of course, vice versa. To be my wedded wife.

And I do promise and covenant before God And these witnesses To be your loving and faithful spouse. For better or for worse. In plenty in want. In joy and in sorrow.

In sickness and in health. To love and to cherish. As long as we both shall live. And, If the statistics are to be believed, Roughly 40 to 50% of the time, They're both lying through their teeth, Aren't

they?

At least that's what the divorce researchers tell us On the Divorce Reform website. Approximately 40 to 50%, Depends on which statistics you follow, 40 to 50% of British marriages Ultimately end in divorce.

[ 4 : 18 ] Now, usually there are dreams of Happily ever after. After the wedding. But the sad fact is that After the honeymoon is over, Life hits.

And we still live in a fallen world. And sometimes, There will be those times When things aren't better. But they're worse. When we're not in plenty.

We're in want. Times when there's no joy. There's only sorrow. Health went away. And now we are dealing with sickness. And it's at times like that, That a married couple's love Is put to the test. You see, You can't tell What a married couple's Relationship is made of Until they go through Some hard times. And that's when we see If their love has that Stick togetherness That is essential For a happy marriage.

And of course, What's true of a happy marriage Is also true Of your relationship with God. You see, It's easy To serve the Lord When you've got no problems And things are going well.

[ 5 : 24 ] But how is your faith Going to hold up When hardship hits? When bad things happen to you For some unknown reason. When things just don't seem To make any sense.

And God doesn't seem To be looking out for you. Like he doesn't care for you. He's not looking out For your interests. You see, That's what this text Is really about this morning.

Job was a righteous man. He was prosperous. He had served the Lord All of his life. And here we see His faith is put to a test To see if he would remain righteous If his prosperity Were taken away. And as you see from the text, We see how he passed the test. And that leads us To our proposition this morning. So, what is the sermon about? Well, here it is in a nutshell. By way of summary. Since hardship and adversity Reveal the true mettle Of your faith, Be prepared.

For your faith To be tested Through the tough times. That's really where I want to go with this In Job chapter 2. And you'll see how we get there As we begin to unpack this text.

[ 6 : 27 ] But with that said, Let's go ahead and dive in, Shall we? The first thing I want you To take away from this text Is the fact that Because hardship reveals The true nature Of your faith, Point number one, You need to prepare To be tested.

Because that hardship Is coming. It's not optional. Not a single one of us Is going to escape it. And that hardship Is going to test Whether or not Our profession of faith Has any substance Minded or not.

Whether our Christian life Is all talk And no walk. Consider Job for a moment. Why was he being singled out Like this? It was because He was a righteous man.

He wasn't about to endure This adversity Because he was somehow Sinning And he's somehow Reaping the consequences Of his sinful behavior. No, it's because He lived a life Totally dedicated To God.

And in so doing He made a powerful enemy For himself, didn't he? The devil. And as we see Through chapter one He suffered for it. He lost his livelihood. He lost his wealth.

[ 7 : 34 ] He lost his property. He lost his status. He even lost his children To freak accidents. And these things Were only the beginning Of his troubles Because Satan's hatred Of Job Wouldn't let up.

He was hated With a passionate hatred. Why? Because God loved him. And so even after All these things Satan comes to God With a request To afflict Job Even more.

But this time The hurt will be In his own body. Look at verses four and five Again. Satan replied to the Lord Skin for skin A man will give up Everything he has To save his life But reach out And take away his health And he will surely Curse you To your face.

So Satan Says Let me torment him With sickness And Job Will deny his faith You'll see He'll curse you To your face Of course The Lord knows The integrity Of Job's faith And essentially says Go ahead Knock yourself out Just don't kill him And so Satan Goes out To bring more Troubles On this righteous man You see Job's faith Is about to be Tested to the extreme And only then Will we see What kind Of believer He really is Have you ever heard The phrase The proof of the pudding Is in the Eden Maybe that's Just an American Term of phrase But the only way That you can tell If the pudding Is any good Is you got to Give it a taste Right The proof of the pudding Is in the Eden Well that's what We have here Job May look like A righteous man Outwardly What's he really Made of

Let's put him To the test Oh it's easy To serve the Lord On a sunny day  
When there are no Clouds in the sky But what's going To happen When the storm Comes Is Job  
going To lose his peace Is he going To abandon His faith Is he going To curse God And die We'll  
only know After his faith Has been Tested You see This is what The apostle Peter Is talking about  
In 1st Peter chapter 1 And verse 7 Where he says So be truly glad There is wonderful Joy ahead  
Even though It is necessary For you to endure Many trials For a while These trials Are only a test  
Your faith To show that It is strong And pure It is being tested As fire tests And purifies gold And  
your faith Is far more precious To God Than mere gold So if your faith Remains strong After being  
tried By fiery trials It will bring you Much praise And glory And honor On the day When Jesus Christ  
Is revealed To the whole world And there you have it True faith Is only known After it has been  
tested

[10:19] And proven true And the same is true With you as well Do you Profess faith in Christ Well  
then prepare To have your faith Tested Because the same devil That hated Job With a passionate  
hatred Hates you too And for the same reason Because you're loved By God And he hates  
Everything that God Stands for And everything That's precious to him And so it seems As if you're  
in a A difficult Catch-22 I mean on the one hand If you serve the Lord You earn the hatred Of the  
devil And he'll do his utmost To bring your life To misery and ruin Then again On the other hand If  
you don't Obey the Lord Well the devil Isn't interested in you Is he?

He's got you right Where he wants you But then you're liable To fall into the Vengeable hands Of  
someone else Who will be much more Terrible on judgment day Someone who will Hold you  
accountable For your sin And who will punish you With the devil And his angels For all eternity  
Sounds like We're in a tough spot And indeed we are As long as we live In this fallen world And so  
what's the answer?

Well you need to obey The Lord Jesus Christ And trust in him For salvation We love him So if you  
profess Faith in Christ This morning And you probably Wouldn't be here This morning If you didn't  
Well then Point number one Prepare to have Your faith tested Now moving on The next thing I want  
you to take Away from this passage Is exactly how Your faith Is going to be tested You see you  
might Have to go through Various trials Now after all The disasters That came upon him In chapter  
one You might just Go back and Kind of skim Chapter one You'll see all These things That  
happened to him Verse seven Now shows us How Job begins To suffer In the flesh Satan comes to  
him And torments him With severe boils All over his body Look at verse seven Again So Satan Left  
the Lord's Presence And he struck Job With terrible boils From head To foot Now When you have A  
severe inflammation Or what some

Of your translations Might call A loathsome sore On your body That's pain enough But this text  
Indicates that Satan struck him From head to foot All over his body Like it must have Been a  
smallpox Or something like that Or even worse Where sores break out From head to foot All over  
the face And the neck And the back So much That it's impossible To lie down Without writhing In  
pain And that's what's Happening to Job Here Job is in absolute Agony And misery And so he goes  
And sits In a pile of ashes And he begins To scrape himself With a broken piece Of pottery Why  
ashes?

Well If you know anything About that ancient culture You realize that ashes Were a sign of humility  
You might recall In several places In the Old Testament They repented with In dust and ashes Or in  
sackcloth And ashes You see the meaning Was the same The ashes symbolized A repentant And  
humble heart It's almost as if The Lord It's almost as if Job is saying Not through with his words But  
by his actions Lord if I've done Anything wrong I'm so sorry And so Job scrapes himself Notice  
there's There's no healing Ointment There's nobody Tenderly waiting Upon him And bandaging His  
wounds There's nobody Around Who even cares He feels abandoned By God In the midst Of this  
trial But even in the Middle of it all He didn't sin He didn't understand What was going on But neither  
did he Blame God Either He humbly Endured And patiently Went through That trial And that patient  
Endurance Proved The character

[14:08] Of his faith I think many of you Know that I have A military background And it makes me  
Think about the First time I Encountered The special Training that Our military Special forces Go  
through What I learned As I was preparing This sermon this Week was that The American Special  
forces That I'm familiar With They took their Inspiration From the British SAS services Here in  
England And Scotland But when it Comes to special Forces The kind of Training that They go  
Through It really Blows my Mind I mean of Course I Don't have First hand Experience of That

Because I Haven't Gone through It But I Know what's Involved I remember When I Was a Chaplain On a Guided Missile Cruiser Out of Hawaii I had A young Man Who was A young Officer Lieutenant Junior Grade In the Prime of Life He was A physical Specimen An athlete And he Was excited Because he Got accepted To try out For the Navy Seals And he Was all Excited About it Expecting him

To become A Navy Seal About two Weeks later I was walking On the Ship and There he Was What happened What's Going on And he Just looked At me No It's not Going to Happen You know He tried He gave It his Best And he Couldn't Make it You know I have to Confess I Was appalled When I First learned About what Those guys Go through In order To make Those Those Seal Teams Between The intense Physical Training And sleep Deprivation And exposure To the Elements I find It amazing That anyone Can actually Survive A course Like that But then Again That trial By fire As it Were Is necessary To prove Beyond a Shadow of a Doubt Who's got What it Takes And who Doesn't Because after All these Guys are Supposed to Be our Best And in Real life Situations They may Find Themselves In even Worse Circumstances And so Of all the Wannabes How can You tell Who has It And who Doesn't Well you Test them You push Them to Their limits And the Cream rises To the Top You might Have two Athletes Who outwardly Seem evenly Matched but The real Question is Who has The stamina Who has The endurance Necessary to Get the job Done The only The only Way to Find out Is to Test them And that Trial by Fire As it Were Makes it Obvious Who's got It And who Doesn't And in The same Way You have a Similar Principle here In the Christian life As well Do you Profess faith In Christ Well then Prepare To go Through Trials Now please Understand These things Should not Seem strange To us When we Find ourselves Going through Difficult Times Because Hardship And Adversity Are part And parcel Of the Christian life Let me say That again Hardship And adversity Are part And parcel Of the Christian Life You know So often We are Attracted by I want to Say sub Gospel messages That indicate That Christian Life is all About prosperity

And blessing And it's all Going to be Good It's all Going to be Happily ever After That's not Necessarily The case Is it I mean Consider our Prime example The Lord Jesus himself As we examine His life In scripture We see that This life Was not an Easy ride For him Jesus didn't Have it Peaches and Cream The apostle Paul didn't Have it Peaches and Cream And you Won't have It easy Either If you Intend To be Faithful To the Lord In this Life That's why Peter Tells us In 1st Peter chapter 4 In verse 12 Dear friends Do not Be surprised At the Painful Trial That you Are suffering As though Something strange Were happening To you But rejoice That you Participate in The sufferings Of Christ So that you May be Overjoyed When his Glory Is revealed 1st Peter 4 In verse 12 Likewise Our lord Tells us In Zechariah Chapter 13 That he Will refine His people Like silver And test Them like Gold And then They will Call on His name And he Will answer Them And he Will be Their god And they Will be His people You see The apostle Paul understood This clearly And that's Why he warns Us in 2nd Peter chapter 3 In verse 12 A passage Of scripture That I'm Sure some Of you Have probably Memorized That all Those who Desire to Live godly In christ Jesus shall What's the word Shall suffer All those Who desire To live godly In christ Jesus Shall suffer 2nd Timothy Chapter 3 Verse 12 The point Is that We need To prepare For the Trial To expect It To know That it's Coming Knowing Full well That the Lord Does not Intend To keep Us From all Hardship But rather To sustain Us And uphold Us Through Those Difficult Trials Yea Though I Walk Through the Valley Of the Shadow Of death I will Fear No evil For thou Art with Me God Doesn't Keep You From Trials But he Is with You Through Those Trials Indeed His Grace Is sufficient For us For his Power Is made Perfect In weakness So Point number Two Prepare [ 19 : 12 ] For trials Because they Really are The Lord's Refining Fire And finally This Adversity This Misfortune Can take A different Form as Well Because Hard Times Reveal The real Substance Of our Faith We Also Need To Be Prepared For Temptation Another Tactic That the Enemy Uses Against You In Spiritual Warfare Is to Tempt You When You're Vulnerable To Wait Until Your resolve Is weakened And then To Sort of Hit You In Your Soft Spot Look At What Happened To Job Look At Verse Nine!

And His Wife Said To Him Are You Still Trying To Maintain Your Integrity Curse God And Die So Here Job Is Tempted By His Wife To Blaspheme God In The Middle Of His Despair Now Please Understand This Was Probably A Very Tempting Thing To Do I Mean After All Job Might Have Rationalized In His Mind I Haven't Done Anything Wrong I Mean Why Is God All Me To Go Through All Of This I Mean What Kind!

Of God Is Hold Fast To Your Integrity In Other Words Can't You See That Your Devotion To God Is Worthless He Hasn't Protected You God Doesn't Love You God Doesn't Care About You All Your Faith Has Brought You Is This Misery And This Ruin And This Misfortune And So Satan Tempts Job Through The One Who Is Closest To Him The One Who Should Have Supported Him The Who Should Have Been Trying To Help Him Even His Very Own Wife Isn't That Odd How The Devil Sometimes Uses Those Who Are Dearest To Us To Tempt Us Think Of Adam Being Tempted By His Wife Think Of Jesus Himself Being Tempted By One Of His Dearest Friends The Disciple Peter Right And So Here Satan

Urges Job Through His Wife To Turn His Back On God The Key is That Job Knew That Even Though He Didn't Understand The Situation That God Was Still In Control That Somehow God Was Justified Shall We Receive Good From God And Not Evil You See In This Statement Job Is Acknowledging God's Providence He's The Creator Of The World He's The Sustainer Of Everything In It And So Nothing Can Happen Apart From God's Sovereign Control So Job Once Again Reaffirms His Faith By Insisting That Both Good And Evil Can Come From The Lord Who Is Always Just And Does As He Pleases On The Earth Now This Is A Hard Saying Because Sometimes We Like To Think That God Would Never Send Bad Times

God Would Never Send Hardship What Does The Scripture Say Consider Isaiah Chapter 45 In Verse 7 Where The Lord Says I Am The One Who Creates The Light And Makes The Darkness I Am The One Who Sends The Good Times And The Bad Times I The Lord Am The One Who Does These Things Isaiah 45 So Satan Tempts Job To Deny His Faith And To Curse His God But Job's Faith Is You Know It Makes Me Think Of Some Of Those Hidden Camera Reality TV Shows That You See From Time To Time On Television I Think You Know What I'm Talking About Maybe You've Seen Some Of These Shows Before A Show That Shows Various Clips Of Hidden Cameras That Catch People In The Act Of Stealing Or Some Kind Of Misconduct The Target Is Usually A Babysitter Or Put

[ 23 : 16 ] In A Position Of Trust And Then The Camera Catches Them When They Are Violating That Trust By Stealing Money Or What Have You Now I'm Not Going To Pass Judgment On How Uncouth Some Of Those Shows May Be But The Point Is That You Can't Tell If Somebody Is Honest Just By Looking At Them It's Only When They Face That Moment Of Temptation That They Show Their True Colors You See That's When The Trusted Housekeeper Becomes A Thief Or When The Responsible Employee Is Exposed As A Fraud Likewise Your Character Is Similarly Revealed When You Go Through That Moment Of Temptation Because Temptation Can Sometimes Serve As A Test Of Our Faith And Here Is Job's Moment Of Weakness And Here He's Tempted To Abandon!

See Are You Going To Obey The Lord Or Will You Succumb To The Lure Of Sin What's Most Important To You At That Moment You See Temptation Is Where The Rubber Meets The Road Because Again It's Easy To Serve The Lord When Everything Is Going Great But What About That Moment When God's Ways Don't Seem To Make Any Sense And Sin Seems!

Seems Some Of God's Purposes It Serves To Refine Our Faith And To Prove The Integrity Of Our Christian Walk So Don't Think For A Moment That The Lord Is Going To Spare You From All Temptation In Fact If You Have Made A Half Hearted Effort To Live The Christian Life You Already Know Very Well That Temptation Is An Ever Present Reality And That's Why We Need God's Grace And Power To Work In Our Lives To Enable Us To Say No To Sin Because After All Until We Get That New Nature!

From Him We're Still In Bondage To Sin Until God Empowers Us By His Spirit Our Struggle Against Sin Is In Vain But The Good News Is That This Is Precisely What God Gives Us In Christ A New Nature Born From Above Filling Us With His Holy Spirit To Empower Us To Live Lives That Are Pleasing To Him And How Do We Please Him Of Course By Staying Ever Vigilant Against Sin That Temptation Is Coming Maybe Not Today Maybe Not Tomorrow But Eventually It Will Come And We Are Going To Be Ready For It Knowing That That Temptation Is Likely To Come And Hit Us When We're At Our Weakest All right So how Can We Summarize Job Chapter Two Well In A Nutshell Be Prepared To Prove What Your Faith Is Made Of Be Wise Think Ahead Don't Be Hardship And Trials Are Coming To Test Your Faith The Lord Promises Us That They Will Just Like That Married Couple Stands Before Their The Minister There On Their Wedding Day So Easy To Think That The Future Is Going To Be All Blessings And Happily Ever After But The Reality Is Often Quite Different We Still Live In A Fallen World There Is Still!

[ 27 : 03 ] A Very Real Enemy Out There Who Would Be Delighted To Ruin Your Life If Indeed You Have Faith In The Lord Jesus Christ And You Turned From Your Sins I Want You To See Adversity For What It Is It's Like The Lord's Refining Fire Testing Us And Helping Us Prove The Genuineness Of Our Faith And Even In The Middle Of That Storm Whatever Form That Storm Might Take In Your Great Shepherd And He's Tending Your Soul And He's Working Out All Things For Your Good Because You Love Him And You're Called According To His Purpose As The Prophet Jeremiah Reminds Us In Lamentations Chapter 3 In Verse 31 And I'll Leave You With This For The Lord Does Not Abandon Anyone Forever Though He Brings Grief He Also!

Shows Compassion According Amen Let's Pray Lord God How Easy It Is For Us To Get Our Eyes Off Of You And The Truth Of Your Word When We Go Through Hardships And Trials And Difficult