

Why All The Suffering? - Job 1:1-2:13

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[0 : 00] One said, part of God's answer, when God answered the question of suffering, he gave us the book of Job, which is 42 chapters. In other words, it's not an easy answer.

So we're going to be looking at Job partly this morning, but at other passages. But we're going to read all of chapter 1 as we begin.

So Job, just before Psalms, Job chapter 1.

In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job.

This man was blameless and upright. He feared God and shunned evil. He had seven sons and three daughters, and he owned 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 donkeys, and had a large number of servants.

[1 : 25] He was the greatest man among all the people of the East. His sons used to hold feasts in their homes on their birthdays, and they would invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.

When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would make an arrangement for them to be purified. Early in the morning, he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.

This was Job's regular custom. One day, the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them.

The Lord said to Satan, Where have you come from? 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. Does Job fear God for nothing?

[2 : 27] Satan replied. Have you not put a hedge around him and a household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, and so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land.

But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face. The Lord said to Satan, Very well then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.

Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord. One day when Job's sons and daughters were fasting and drinking wine in the eldest brother's house, a messenger came to Job and said, The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby, and the Sabaeans attacked and made off with them.

They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you. While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, The fire of God fell from the heavens and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you.

While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, The Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and swept down on your camels and made off with them.

[3 : 40] They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you. While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the elder brother's house, when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house.

It collapsed on them, and they are dead. And I am the only one who has escaped to tell you. At this Job got up, tore his robe, shaved his head.

Then he fell to the ground in worship and said, Naked I came from my mother's womb. Naked I shall depart. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away.

May the name of the Lord be praised. In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing. Well, we'll be looking at Job in a little while.

Before we start, just to make mention of a couple of things. In your new sheet, you'll notice there's some books alongside the Bible that we should primarily read.

[5 : 06] We can also read the experiences of Christians who suffered. So as we go through the series, I'll recommend books along the way that may be helpful to you. These are two that I have read myself in the past and found them very, very helpful.

Both Paul Mallard. He writes of his wife's suffering and consequence knock-on effects on their family.

That's the first one. And then others you may know, Joni Tada and her injuries through her life, a place of healing, which is very, very helpful as well.

So those are two. I've ordered some copies. I hope I'll have them for next Sunday. And you can purchase them if you would like them. The other thing to say is the notes that I gave out today.

There's not really questions like there normally is. What I've done is just the same headings will be on the screen as on the pieces of paper. But there's kind of like little summary points.

[6 : 15] So what I'd like us to do is more to engage with what I have to say, what we look at from God's word. There'll be lots of questions.

We won't answer everything. So maybe there's a question that arises and you need to write that down. You can talk to me afterwards or underline something. But it's more to be reflective of what we hear from God's word.

So with all that in mind, let's pray and ask for his help to us today. The Lord is majestic, sovereign in all his ways.

We bow to your mastery. We bow in worship before you. We humble ourselves before you, O Lord.

For you are the God who gives life. The God who takes life. The God in whom we can trust.

[7 : 33] So would you please help us as we look at your word together to be listening carefully. Not just to understand with our minds.

But that we would know truth penetrating our hearts. Changing our minds and our wills. That we might love you and trust you more and more.

We ask for your help. Amen. About three years ago, I noticed a slight tremor in my right arm.

I tried to ignore it, thinking that it was just a trapped nerve and that it would soon go away. After a number of months, it was still there, so I went to the doctors.

And what followed was a series of tests with the neurologists. On the final visit, I sat waiting for the results. I've often thought about suffering, and I've asked the question, why, many times.

- [8 : 48] Reading and reasoning things out in my mind. But this time, it was different. It was personal. Jonathan Grant.
- I walked in and I sat down. The consultant looked at me sympathetically. You have early onset Parkinson's disease.
- Now Parkinson's is a neurological disease which affects and controls the movement of the body. And thankfully, with medication, it's being kept in check.
- And it remains quite stable. Now I share this not to gain sympathy. Or because my suffering is worse than yours.
- It's not. I've sat with many of you. I've talked with you. I've prayed with you. I've cried with you. I share it because for most of us, the question of suffering is not intellectual and philosophical.
- [9 : 54] It's personal and experiential. So for you, perhaps, you've watched a family member struggle with cancer.
- Maybe you've lost a close friend through a tragic accident. But maybe it's even more personal than that. Maybe you are suffering. Perhaps a broken relationship.
- An ongoing illness. Struggling with unfulfilled dreams. You see, we all live in a world where suffering is deeply real.
- Disease and disability. Earthquakes and tsunamis. Wars and famine. Violence and rape. And the hard reality is that if we live long enough, we will suffer.
- Now, the question before us is this morning, what do we do about all this suffering? Well, our natural reaction is to blame God.
- [11 : 02] A parent buries their own child and inside they're crying out, Why did you let my child die? A landslide smothers a whole village, wiping out hundreds.
- How can you let this happen? Why did you create such a horrible world? Why do you inflict such terrible pain? Our experience of suffering means we are hurt and we are angry.
- Something is not right with this world. We don't like suffering and we desperately want it to stop. And God, it seems, is to blame for all the suffering we see and experience.
- But yet, there's a problem. You see, we can only truly blame God if we believe in God. If you're an atheist, you can't blame God because, well, to you, he doesn't exist.
- You cannot get angry at a non-existent God. A true atheist believes that life in this world is just a random series of events.
- [12 : 19] To quote one philosopher, we are simply the outcome of an accidental collection of atoms. So why is suffering a problem? It's just the natural shape and form of life.
- Why is it a problem if a child is born with no limbs? What does it matter if a tornado wipes out a village? It's just the way it is. No rhyme or reason.
- It just is. Get on with it. So if an atheist is to be true to himself or herself, they have no God to be angry at.
- We cannot blame a God who does not exist. And if God does not exist, well, then we cannot expect him to intervene and end the suffering we face.
- However, whatever our belief about God, all of us have this sense that suffering is not meant to be.
- [13 : 18] Deep down, we want suffering to end. So what do we do about the problem? Well, I think we need to at least consider what God has to say.
- We mightn't like everything that God says, and God mightn't answer everything we ask, but we must let God be God. If we're going to be angry at God, and I don't think there's any wrong in being angry, then we need to leave room for him to answer.

We cannot simply shout at God and not listen to what he has to say. So three things we're going to look at in response to why all the suffering.

First, God and the cause of suffering. Turn with me, please, to Genesis chapter 2. God and the cause of suffering.

The Bible story begins with a world that is full of beauty and harmony. It's a world where there is no suffering. It's life as we long for in all its wonder.

[14 : 33] But we don't have to read too far along, and we begin to see what caused the suffering in the world. And it seems there are three interrelated causes or reasons for suffering.

First, human rebellion. God created a world in which there was one loving ruler. God is the creator. God made the world, so he owns the world.

And because he owns the world, he makes the rules. Chapter 2, verse 15. The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden. Eden, of course, means paradise.

Took him to work in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, You are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it, you will certainly die.

Now, I don't think it was some kind of magical fruit. God was simply setting a boundary. Don't break my commands. Because if you do, there will be disorder, disease, decay.

[15 : 50] It's all going to end in death. If you set yourself up as ruler, it will end in terrible suffering. And as we'll see, that's what happened.

The first man and woman rebelled against God, and suffering has entered the world. In fact, the history of mankind, including ourselves, has been ongoing in their rebellion.

As a human race, we have added to suffering through selfish actions and evil choices. So first, there is human rebellion.

Second, there's satanic influence. Chapter 3, verse 1. Now, the snake, later identified as Satan, known as the deceiver, who is a fallen angel.

We're not told how or why not all these things are given to us, but simply that he is a fallen angel. Now, the snake was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made.

[16 : 58] He said to the woman, Did God really say you must not eat from the tree, from any tree in the garden? Verse 4. You will not certainly die, the snake said to the woman.

For God knows that when you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. In other words, you will be the ones who will decide what is good and what is evil.

You see, Satan is the arch enemy of God. He loves to break and destroy. He sets himself up against God and is motivated by a pure hate of all that is good and beautiful.

And we must never underestimate Satan's influence. The Bible describes him as a force of evil, the God of this age, or the ruler of the kingdom of the air.

The Apostle Paul talks about his thorn in the flesh, his suffering, as a messenger of Satan. Luke tells us that when Jesus went around healing people, he was healing those who were under the power of the devil.

[18 : 13] So, second, Satan has had an influence and continues to have an influence in causing suffering.

Third, God's judgment. As humans rebelled and as Satan influenced, the Bible is very clear why there is suffering.

Suffering is in the world as a result of God's judgment on the world. Look at God's response to this rebellion and this satanic influence.

Chapter 3, verse 14. So the Lord God said to the snake, because you have done this, cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals.

Verse 15. And I will put enmity between you and the woman and between her offspring and yours. So there's going to be this conflict continuously between Satan and people.

[19 : 19] Verse 16. To the woman, he said, I will make your pains in childbearing very severe. With painful labour, you will give birth to children.

Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you. Now that last part is that she will want to dominate and rule over and your husband will want to rule over in a tyrannical kind of way.

Verse 17. To Adam, he said, because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, you must not eat from it. Cursed is the ground because of you.

Through painful toil, you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles and you will eat the plants of the field.

End of verse 19. For dust you are and to dust you will return. This curse, this judgment, comes from God and it results in all kinds of suffering.

[20 : 31] suffering. The sufferings we see and experience, whether it's physical, spiritual, social, relational, psychological, everything is now out of sync. The fabric of the universe has been undone.

It's like somebody has pulled a thread and keeps pulling and everything is unravelling. And as a result, we now live in a world which is under the sentence of death.

Paul describes this suffering as frustration. Have a look at Romans chapter 8. Romans chapter 8.

Here it is described as frustration. The world doesn't function as it should. Everything is frustrated. Chapter 8, verse 20.

For the creation was subjected to frustration not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it.

[21 : 45] Who subjected it? God subjected it to frustration. God subjected it to bondage and decay.

And that judgment is being felt globally and personally every day. Now we mustn't think that God is sitting there in the throne of heaven thinking up terrible cancers and concocting terrible diseases that he can just unleash upon the world at will.

No suffering suffering in all its different kinds are the consequences of rebellion. The results of satanic influence. The outworkings of God's judgment.

But we ask why would God judge the world in this way? Well look at the rest of verse 20 of Romans 8. God judges in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

God judges in such a way to show how terrible and awful sin is and how desperately we need a saviour who would come and intervene and liberate us and free us from a sin wrecked world.

[23 : 25] So in summary of the first God and the cause of suffering we can say that man is ultimately responsible Satan desires it and God has willed it.

So first God and the cause of suffering. Second God and his control over suffering. While we live in a world that is broken and under God's judgment we mustn't fall into the false teaching that says and we hear it from people your suffering is a result of personal sin or your suffering is because you don't have enough faith.

Many Christians operate in that way and it's dangerous and it's terrible. It's not what the Bible teaches. We should not view that every suffering we experience is a direct judgment from God.

The level of our personal suffering is not equated with our level of personal sin. So if we are suffering in a particular way it's not because of the amount of sin I've done.

So if I have some incurable unidentified disease it's not because necessarily there's a whole heap of sin in my life. Rather what we see and experience in our world today is the outworkings of what we looked at in part one.

[24 : 57] The outworkings of God's curse on the world. We live in the world that is frustrated under the sentence of death. And yet we live in a world where God controls and rules over all suffering.

So let's turn to the book of Job. Go to the book of Job. The author at the very beginning wants us to know that Job is a good man.

He's not sinless, he's not perfect, but he is righteous. So Job, just before Psalms, somebody got it there and I'll call out the number.

509. 509, Job chapter 1. So we read there, we're introduced to him that in the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job.

This man was blameless and upright. He feared God and shunned evil. He even, verse 5, prayed for his children in case they had sinned.

[26 : 30] Job is set up before us as somebody who's innocent, but yet he has suffered terribly in three ways.

First, he suffered at the hands of other men in verses 13 and 17. Evil actions from outsiders. People have come in and it's meant he has lost his herds and his servants as they took them away.

He suffers at the hands of other men. Second, he suffers natural disasters, we might call them in verses 16 and 19. A fire comes and a tornado comes that destroyed his animals and horrifically a wind comes in, knocks down the house and kills ten of his children, all of his children, their husbands and wives, gone in a moment.

And then third, he suffers, we didn't read this, but have a look at chapter 2 verse 7. He suffered personal illness and pain.

Chapter 2 verse 7, so Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and afflicted Job with painful sores and sores on his feet to the crown of his head, an excruciating flesh-eating disease from which there was no comfort.

[28 : 06] Job is an innocent man, yet he suffers terribly. And that is how most suffering appears to us.

We can do nothing wrong, we can live God-honouring lives, and yet we can experience an incurable illness, we can face the death of our child, and we could lose everything in a moment.

Why is this? we look out and we wonder, is anyone in control of all of this, or is this just a random set of events, and somehow I've just been dealt a bad set of cards, and I have to live with it?

Well, Job gives us answers. First, Satan causes the suffering, or does he?

at first it seems Satan caused the suffering. Go back to chapter 1, verse 6. One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them.

[29 : 19] The Lord said to Satan, where have you come from? Satan answered the Lord, from roaming throughout the earth, going to and fro in it. What a picture.

of evil intent. Roaming around, looking to cause harm and disorder. And after his conversation with God about this person, Job, Job doesn't know about this conversation.

We read in verse 11, Satan says to God, but now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face.

the Lord said to Satan, very well then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.

Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord, and the suffering begins. The attacks from evil men, the natural disasters, his personal suffering.

[30 : 25] suffering. And in regards to his personal suffering, look at verse 7 again, chapter 2, verse 7. Satan went out from the presence of the Lord, and afflicted Job with painful sores and soles on his feet to the crown of his head.

Satan, it seems, has caused the suffering that has come into Job's life. Now, that raises big questions for us. If that is true, does that mean Satan has power to do as he pleases?

Do we live in a world in which God is just simply an opposite but equal force, kind of darkness and light, good and evil, 50-50, one against the other, in an arm wrestle?

Who's going to win? Has God got his hands tied trying to second guess Satan's next move, always playing catch-up, trying to outwit each other?

Well, that's how many people view it, but that's not the answer. The answer is more complex and difficult, but yet clear.

[31 : 46] God is supremely in control of all suffering. God is in control of all suffering.

You see, behind Satan's desire to destroy and harm is God's sovereignty. Satan is on a leash.

God has him on a lead. Or as Luther once said, he is God's Satan, a servant to God's purposes.

Look carefully at what God says in this discussion with Satan. First, it's God who initiates the conversation about Job.

So look at chapter 1, verse 8. God initiates the conversation about Job. 1, verse 8. The Lord said to Satan, have you considered my servant Job?

[32 : 49] So God is in charge of all events here, not Satan. Second, it's God who permits the suffering.

He initiates the conversation, he permits the suffering. Chapter 1, verse 12, read it carefully. The Lord said to Satan, very well then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.

God sets boundaries. Chapter 2, verse 6. The Lord said to Satan, very well then, he is in your hands, but you must spare his life.

God sets boundaries. You can do this, Satan. You can allow this to happen, but no more and no further.

You will not cross the lines that I mark out. Satan can't act without God's permission, without God's decree, without God's say-so.

[34 : 10] So, he initiates the conversation, he permits the suffering, and third, it is God who ultimately is the cause.

And I use that word carefully and with great consideration. Look how Job responds to the suffering.

Chapter 1, verse 20. At this, Job got up, tore his robe, shaved his head, then he fell to the ground in worship and said, Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall depart.

the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. The Lord has taken away.

He's taken away the flocks and herds, he's taken away the servants, he's taken away my children. May the name of the Lord be praised.

[35 : 21] in all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing. God has done no wrong in what has happened.

And concerning his own health, chapter 2, verse 9, his wife said to him, to Job, this is in his personal illness, are you still maintaining your integrity?

Curse God and die. Job replied, you are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God and not trouble?

Do we just accept that in the course of life, God is in control of good things, but not in control of the hard things and the bad things that happen in our life?

In fact, look at how the author summarizes what happened to Job. Go to the end of the book, chapter 42, verse 11.

[36 : 40] Here is, if you like, the summary, the conclusion of the whole book. chapter 42, verse 11.

All his brothers and sisters and everyone who had known him before came and ate with him in his house. They comforted and consoled him over all the trouble the Lord had brought on him.

They comforted and consoled him over all the trouble the Lord had brought on him. And each one gave him a piece of silver and a gold ring. God is the ultimate cause because God is the one who is ultimately in control.

You see, if God is not in control, if God is not in charge, then Satan is. And at best, God is just an equal but opposite force, trying to do his best, locked in an arm wrestle, who's going to win?

And as difficult and as hard as it is to read these words and understand the minds and the ways of God, God is in control of all suffering.

[38 : 11] Nothing happens in your life without his say-so. Not one thing. Every one of our days has been written before one of them came to be.

Not one thing is outside of the control of God. Not one. And if God is in supreme control, and if God is sovereign over the order and events of this life, then here is a God who not only helps us, but a God who can use the frustrations and the sufferings and the struggles and trials we may go through for good purposes.

others. So God and the cause of suffering, God and his control over suffering. And third, God and his cross for our suffering.

You see, from what we've looked at so far, it may appear that God is cold and unmoved. in fact, it's as if God is sitting in the comfort of another world, immune to the hurts and pains of life.

But we need to remember that just as God in his sovereignty, and in what in some ways remains a mystery to us, that God who chooses suffering for the world and our lives, has also chosen suffering for himself.

[39 : 54] First, God suffers with us. The unique, and it remains unique to the God of the Bible, to Christianity, and the wonderful truth is that God has come to us in the person of Jesus Christ.

God comes to suffer with us. Let's have a look at Philippians chapter 2. Philippians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians chapter 2.

Again, if somebody has a page number just to help us all. 1-1-8-0.

Thereabouts. Philippians chapter 2, anyway. Philippians chapter 2, chapter 2. So God suffers with us.

Chapter 2, verse 6, tells us this. Speaking of Christ, verse 6, who, who, who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.

[41 : 25] Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness. God became one of us.

He never ever ceased to be God. And yet, he became fully human. And in Christ, God lived and experienced the pains and hurts of life.

He understands what it is to live in a broken and a dying world. And when personal suffering came to Christ, look closely at verse 6.

He did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage. So, Christ did not exploit his Godness or his divinity and somehow escape the suffering.

He submitted himself to suffering. Something bad came along. It wasn't that he kind of flicked the God switch and go, right, let's end the suffering here. No, he remained fully God and as fully man he submitted himself to the frustrations and the broken and decaying and dying world.

[42 : 48] You see, here we see a God who desperately loves us and cares for us, that he would suffer with us. He enters our pain so that when we cry out to God, he understands.

A God who knows. Not just because he's God, but because he's experienced it himself. God is not distant and removed, unfeeling and uncaring.

He knows your hurts. He subjected himself to suffering. He suffers with you. suffering. But more than that, he suffers for us.

Look at verse 8. Being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on the cross.

The cross of God is the ultimate suffering of God. God suffers for us. We talked earlier about God's judgment on the world because of sinful rebellion and that judgment would continue for an eternity unless God did something about it.

[44 : 12] And the glorious news is God has done something about it. He stepped in. The hope was, Romans 8 verse 20, 21, was that creation would be liberated from its bondage of decay.

And he does that by intervening into the world in the person of his Son, taking on himself my sin and your sin, suffering the judgment of God for us.

And as Christ hung on the cross, as he experienced that suffering, he cried out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And at that moment, Christ suffers the abandonment of God.

He suffers in its fullest sense, the wrath of God. He suffers hell. He suffers for me. He suffers for you.

And as we trust him, we can be forgiven and freed from an eternal judgment to come. Set free from what our sins deserve, liberated so that one day we might receive the redemption of our bodies.

[45 : 30] God suffers the ultimate suffering for us so that we do not have to suffer eternally. You see, suffering causes us and says, look at the cross.

Come and see the God who suffers with us, but look at the God who suffers for you. A God who loves you deeply and immensely.

Out of compassion and mercy, he comes to deal with our suffering. In all our questions, we must never forget that when God chose suffering for this world, he chose suffering for himself.

and it's through his suffering that will come our healing. So where does this leave us?

Trust God. I'm aware because I have scribbled out, rewritten, re-read, scribbled out again, because I don't have my questions answered.

[46 : 48] Things remain unresolved in my mind. We can still be angry. I get that. Anger is understandable. We can still be hurting. It's natural.

Our hurts don't go away. It's hard for us to reconcile why God wills and permits and at times causes suffering. And then at the same time we read that he submits to suffering and he suffers with us and for us so that all suffering would come to an end.

And we can't cope with it. We can't hold this together. And yet it's true. Where we cannot see what is going on or make sense of what is happening, what we can see is a God who is in control of all things, who is over every detail of your life and over everything in this world, over Satan himself.

Therefore, we can trust him. In our questioning, let God answer. Listen to what he says.

Let God be God. Trust the God who suffers with us and for us to end all suffering.

[48 : 15] Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Lord God, we struggle right now.

We're struggling. We struggle to understand everything. We struggle to understand the suffering that we are experiencing or we see loved ones going through.

We confess that we can be angry. And we bring it all before you and ask that you would help us to trust you as the God who is over all things, the God who came to suffer for us to end all suffering so that we might have life with you.

Help us to walk with you through these series of talks. Father, would you teach us and would you help us where we cannot see to keep trusting you to know that you have us in your arms of love and you will never, ever let us go.

[50 : 00] Help us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.