

The Book of Job; The Suffering of Job

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[0:00] Come to the Word of God with me to the Book of Job. The Book of Job, which is just before Psalms in your Bibles. A challenging book, a book that's treasured.

Some have really esteemed the Book of Job as a very telling story. It is the oldest book in the Bible as far as when it was penned, people reckon.

And perhaps the oldest book in the whole world. So, what a book. The Book of Job tells of one man's struggle with pain.

One of the greatest mysteries of life for us still. The oldest book, yet still relevant. Amen? Who's got some pain? Some pains? Some pains in our lives, within our life.

This book tells also of the struggles of Job's friends as they tried to comfort him. How they tried to understand him. Tried to offer some words of wisdom, so they thought.

[1:10] A story of pain, of sorrow, of loss. Yet, in the tragedy still, a story of ultimate triumph. Love, and hope, and joy, and comfort.

Now, last night, something was really bugging me. Now, on the scale of suffering, it was probably a number one out of ten.

But, for me, it was really frustrating and stressful. And, as a result, this morning, I'm sleep deprived and feeling, still suffering some of the stress of what happened last night.

Let me tell you what happened. In the ceiling, right above my bed, something was scratching. Something was scratching, scrummaging, scrabbling.

Some uninvited creature to my home. I don't know what it is. I hope to find out. Because I don't want to go through that again. But, you know, it's just that annoyance of something that's bugging you, keeping you awake.

[2:22] And you think, is it going to fall through the vent? Whatever that monster is, it's probably just a little mouse, but it could be a possum, who knows. But, suffering.

There's lots of scales of suffering, isn't there? Things that bug us in our lives. Things that weigh us down. Things that get on our nerves. Job tells us of such a thing.

Of, really? This is probably on a ten out of ten, as far as the scale goes. But, let's hear about Job, as we read through from chapter one. And we're just going to touch on a few verses here through, as we cover some of the main themes of the story of one man's struggle with pain.

Job 1, verse 1. There was a man in the land of us, whose name was Job. And that man was perfect, and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.

Which means he shunned evil. He feared God, and he shunned evil. A righteous man, a man who was honoured, and esteemed. A man who was considered righteous in God's eyes.

[3:38] He did right, and he shunned wrong. He refused it. And, the Bible reckons, as the Lord speaks of him, later, there's no one else like him.

He's just so, such a tremendous spiritual man. Job. It goes on, in verse 2.

And there were born unto Job seven sons and three daughters. His substance also was 7,000 sheep.

Now, I know someone with 600 sheep. This makes that look like a little flock. He's got 7,000. Wow. And 3,000 camels and 500 yoke of oxen.

Wow. He must have had a lot of pasture, a lot of wealth there. And 500 she-asses, donkeys.

[4:35] And a very great household. Here was this man. Just had so much that you could see that he had.

Ten children, 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 dachshund, 500 donkeys. A very great household. So that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east.

He was just the top of the tree. He was the greatest. Now there was a day, verse 6, when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord.

Job was a spiritual, faithful man. Next we see the curtain pulled aside to show us behind the scenes into the unseen realm, the unseen world, behind the veil, as it were, in this heavenly setting.

You could reckon it like a heavenly courtroom with a hearing in session. And it says the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord and Satan came also among them.

[5:48] These angelic creatures. Satan came also among them. Satan is the accuser or the prosecutor, if you like.

The adversary. Our opponent. Revelation calls him the accuser of the brethren. Satan came also among them.

And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Where have you come from? Then Satan answered and said, To the Lord. From going to and fro in the earth and from walking up and down in it.

And the Lord said, verse 8, Unto Satan. Hast thou considered, my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth?

A perfect and an upright man. One that feareth God and escheweth evil. He fears God and he refuses evil. Verse 9. And Satan answered then unto the Lord and said, Doth Job fear God for naught?

[6:58] What Satan is saying of Job here and of such as Job, He's putting out there that people only act out of self-interest.

They only do what's in it for me. It's the popular radio station, WIIFM. What's in it for me? That's what people think these days, isn't it?

They always have. That's what Satan reckons here of Job. He's only serving you because of what he can get out of it. Verse 10.

Hast thou not made and hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.

What Satan is saying here is that, God, you protect your people, and you bless Job in many ways. Then Satan says, Job will curse you if he loses your blessings.

[8:00] We see that in verse 11. Put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. Satan says, Let Job suffer, then we'll see how righteous he is.

Verse 12. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thine power, only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.

And so the most righteous man on the earth was chosen to be tested. God sets out to prove Satan, prove to Satan that Job is not righteous just because he's being blessed.

And so begins this dramatic account of the man Job. And we see then a series of messages to Job. One message after another.

A series of terrible catastrophes strike. Verse 13. We see through the 13th through 19.

[9:09] Now, I had a look on Job's Facebook page, and here were some pictures that he took of some of his animals. So just to kind of create that mental picture in your mind here, as it were, if Job had a Facebook page, this might have been what he might have shown on his Facebook page, as it were.

Just a little bit of... Just to kind of make it a little lighthearted here. There was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house.

Verse 14 of chapter 1. And there came a messenger unto Job and said, The oxen were ploughing, and the asses feeding beside them, and the Sabaeans fell upon them and took them away.

Yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. So cross that one off your page, as it were. You don't have them anymore.

They're gone. And verse 16. And when he was yet speaking, there came also another and said, The fire of God has fallen from heaven, and have burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them.

[10:14] And I only am escaped alone to tell thee. The sheep are gone.

Verse 17. While he was yet speaking, there came also another and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands.

These three bands of the Chaldeans, the enemies of God, they fell upon the camels and have carried them away. Yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword, and I only, I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

The camels are gone. Verse 18. While he was yet speaking, there came also another and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house, and behold! Oh no. Not them. Not them. Not my children. There came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead.

And I only am escaped alone to tell thee. Everything gone. His oxen, his donkeys, his camels, his sheep, all taken by enemy raids, the sheep killed in a terrible storm.

[11:25] His great herd of camels. This was true wealth in the oriental world. Camels. They had been taken as well. And then this heart-rending news.

His very family, his seven sons, and his three daughters. They were together in a house when this great wind came, this tornado struck, and the house was demolished, and his children were killed in one fatal blow.

What a great tragedy. It was devastating. What does Job do? What does Job do? Instead of cursing God, as Satan had planned, had predicted, Job praises God.

Verse 20 we see, Then Job arose and rent his mantle. He tore his clothing as a sign of grieving. He shaved his head. Again, a sign of that dedication unto God, as it were.

And he fell down upon the ground and he worshipped. He fell down upon the ground and he worshipped. He'd lost everything. His family, his flocks.

[12:37] He fell down upon the ground and worshipped. Verse 21, And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away.

Blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this, Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly. How could he say this? Blessed be the name of the Lord.

He's given, and he's taken away. I came here with nothing, and I'm going to go with nothing. Amid all his sufferings, he maintained his integrity. What a witness. What a testimony to you, to me.

You that are going through something today. Job stays faithful, faithful, faithful, faithful, no matter what. No matter what. Satan's plan had failed.

Next up, Satan has an audience with God again. He wants to ramp it up. He wants to turn up the heat now. He just wants to turn it up a little notch or two. Or three. We see Job 2, where Satan appears again, and it goes on, verse 5, but put forth thine hand now, Satan says to God, and touch his bone.

[13:49] Touch his bone. Touch his flesh. And he will curse thee to thy face. Verse 6, verse 7, so went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.

who's ever had some itchy sores? Shingles, God forbid. He was stricken with a series of terrible boils from the top of his head to the tips of his toes, the sole of his foot.

He was covered. Covered. Verse 8, and he took him a pot shirt, like a, as you think, a shard of glass. This was a shirt of pot.

It was a, a, a broken piece of pottery. Joe's body now covered in open sores. He sat on the scrap heap, the junk pile.

It was down at the local garbage dump, in effect. You could picture it. Sitting there amongst the ashes, the rubbish, that which was burnt and tossed aside, the broken pottery.

[15:04] Here sits the greatest man in the east. The greatest man of this time. A solitary outcast. Alone.

On the town dunghill. On the dump. On this pile of rubbish. Sitting there in great agony, trying to relieve his suffering by using the broken pieces of pottery.

Scraping those sores. Oh! Doesn't that make you feel it? Itchy. Oh! That itch. I've just got to itch it and itch it and itch it and it'll bleed and sore, sore.

Ugh! That inflamed skin. What a pitiful sight he was. And his suffering now extends to every area of his existence. He's lost everything.

He's sick, in horrible suffering, pain, an outcast. He had to be living out of the city. He was like a, I guess looked somewhat like a leper.

[16:03] He was like tossed aside. An outcast. The suffering of Job was intense. Then, even his wife turns on him.

Here she is in verse 9. Here's Job sitting on the dunghill. Sitting in the scrap heap. Sitting in the junk pile, the garbage dump if you like. And then his wife comes and she says unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity?

You're still trying to be, have integrity, Job. You're still trying to be upstanding and righteous and godly. Curse God and die, she says to him. What a wonderful wifely counsel she had there.

His wife was suffering too, no doubt. You know, we that have spouses that are not well, we suffer as well in part. Because we suffer for them, we feel for them.

Maybe she was going through the ringer too, but her wisdom was curse God and die. Just throw it all in, throw in the towel. Suffering, suffering can be hard, hard going.

[17:15] When you see your loved ones suffer, when you see your loved ones in suffering and pain, it separates the real from the false, doesn't it, when we suffer. It helps to just get to the nub, gets the real heart of the issues.

When faith is under fire, when we're feeling tested and tried, and for some of you it's real for you today, it's real now. This might be touching a cord, it might be hitting a nerve for you, more than even for me.

You know, with my little number one out of ten, that horrible creature in the ceiling, there's nothing compared to what might be happening for you today. And I know some of you are really going through it. But the Lord is with you.

The Lord is with you. And Job lifted up his voice in praise, tested and tried as he was. Verse 21 again. Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there.

You know, I came into this world with nothing, and I'm going to go out with nothing. And the Lord has given, and the Lord has taken away. So what? Whatever. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

[18:19] That was his mantra. Blessed be the name of the Lord. Then we see, through the account of Job's story, we see his three friends, they come on the scene where they come along Job's side, and perhaps Job thought, oh, my three friends are coming.

We're going to get some comfort now. You know, my wife wasn't much help, but here's my three friends now. Maybe they'll sympathise. Maybe they'll comfort me. And his well-intentioned friends, perhaps they were well-intentioned, they just told him that his suffering was because he had committed some awful sin.

But basically he said to Job, it's your fault. Oh, thanks. Thanks for that. It's your fault. You know, it's like some faith preachers these days.

When, you know, I've seen it where in meetings people come forward in a wheelchair and they go back to where they were stationed in their wheelchair and people say, oh, lack of faith.

They blame the man, the woman, for not getting well, for not getting healed. They basically said, it's your fault you're not healed. It's your fault, Job. It's your fault that you're sick, that you're suffering.

[19:32] And all the time they're attacking his integrity with the argument that if God is indeed just, then the righteous are always blessed and the wicked always suffer. That's the kind of simple way of looking at it.

If you're sick, it's because you've sinned. If you're blessed, it's because you're righteous. It must be because there's something wrong in your life that you're having a hard time. Here was Job.

His whole life was turned upside down. He'd lost his wealth, his loved ones in this sudden series of calamities and now his health has gone too. What next?

Here he was. He was just at the end of his road, deeply frustrated. Why? He could not make sense out of his trials. Yet in the depths of perplexity and despair he made one of the profound declarations of faith recorded in the Bible.

Here's what he said. Though he slay me, yet will I trust him. Yet will I trust in him. Though he slay me, if he's going to kill me next, I'm still going to trust in him.

[20:37] It doesn't matter what happens to me. I will trust in him. What a statement of faith that was. In the midst of his tears, Job praised God.

And you can too, dear saint. You might feel like Job in some degree. Even though he'd kill me, yet will I trust in him.

After some months went by, Job did fall into the depths of despair. He was only human after all. He did get to that point of great bitterness and despondency and despair.

Job does not curse God though. That's what Satan wanted. Take everything from him and he'll curse you to your face. But he does, though he does not curse God, he does curse the day of his birth.

He thought, oh, why have I been born? Put up with this. Misery. Despite all his pain and misery, he does not whine about the loss of his wealth or his health.

[21:45] But he does bemoan the reality of human suffering. He says, this is what I've learned. Man that is born of a woman, that means everybody, is of few days and full of trouble.

Life is short and it's full of trouble. That's what Job found. And there's some truth to that at times, isn't there, that we're living in a broken, fallen world where there's brokenness and sin all around us, the misery that man's sin has caused.

One thing that Job came to know though in this awful storm was this telling truth. But he knoweth the way that I take and when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

I shall come forth as gold. And there's one that isn't showing there that is Job 19 verse 25 which is really one of the absolute key ones, the key verses of the book of Job.

Job 19 verse 25 where it says, For I know that my Redeemer liveth and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. I know my Redeemer lives.

[22:59] I know he's alive. I know he's my Redeemer, my Saviour. He knew the Redeemer, the living God. He knew the saving grace of God. I know he lives.

I know he lives. You can depend on God no matter what your circumstances of life. He could still say, When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

God knows, God understands that hardship, that loss, that grief, that trouble. He knows the journey that we're all on.

And some have a rockier road than others. Even though we may not fully grasp what he's doing, what is happening, or why, we can know, When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

I shall come through this, because he is with me. I'll get through this. I'll get through onto the other side. This too shall pass. God tells his people that they may learn to rely on him and him alone for all things.

[24:02] Consider this truth of the coming forth as gold. Gold. And Spurgeon relates this.

I'm quoting Spurgeon. No gold is ever injured in the fire. Stoke the furnace as much as you may. Let the blast be as strong as you will. Thrust the ingot into the very centre of the white heat.

Let it lie in the very heart of the flame. Pile on more fuel. Let another blast torment the coals till they become most vehement with heat. Yet the gold is losing nothing.

It may even be gaining. If any alloy is mingled with it, the alloy is separated from it by the fire to gain impurity. But the purest gold is not one drachma less.

There is not a single particle of it that can be burnt. It is still there. All the better for the fiery trial to which it has been subjected.

[25:12] Spurgeon's saying put the gold in the fire and it will be better for it. It will be purer for it. He goes on and you dear child of God whatever may befall you you shall come out of the fire quite uninjured.

You are under a dark cloud now but you shall come out into brightness and you shall have lost nothing that was worth keeping. What is there that you can lose?

When death comes what will you lose? So even if the worst was to come death then to die is gain. To live is Christ to die is gain.

So end of quote there we see the comfort we can have child of God the fiery trial we shall come forth as gold.

Job shows us how to live by faith. In his testimony we see faith demonstrated in the midst of suffering. brother sister young man young woman older men older women you shall come forth as gold.

[26:30] Life's tests are but for a season and we can demonstrate in the midst of suffering glory to God. Bring him honour.

Job was consistent he said my foot hath held his steps his way have I kept and not declined. He was consistent he was straight down the line he wasn't moved by this.

He may have been shaken but he wasn't moved from his direction from his trust. And it goes on in verse 12 that he trusted in God's word.

Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips. I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food. Brother sister grab the promises of God God we heard before he's not a man that he should lie.

God does not lie. His promises he does not deviate from they're unchangeable immutable they're locked in guaranteed 100% the promises of God and Job says I've esteemed his words his words his words more than my necessary food.

[27:45] He knew the soul food of God's truth the sustaining power of the word of God the promises of God of course we've got much much more of the Bible than he had but we see in chapters 4 through 37 Job's friends give him plenty of bad advice and that can be true too for us well meaning people might say words fellow Christians might say words that actually make us feel worse and Job's friends were miserable comforters they were really more like tormentors what they said to him and they mistakenly blamed his sufferings on his personal sins rather than it's in God's hands what he lets happen to us and how he tests us and grows us one of them told how God wanted Job to be humbled now that could well have been truthful we could all do with a bit more humility

I can say that for me but Job refers through the book to God as almighty he often refers to God as almighty that was his take on God he is almighty in other words he's all sufficient he is all powerful and the message of the book of the man Job for us today is fear God trust God trust God's wisdom we see in the closing chapters God God God God speaks to Job and he restores him in chapter 38 God challenges Job to reflect on God's own power and wisdom in governing creation he says get a grip Job get it in perspective you're a little piece of dust in the scheme of the cosmos in the scheme of creation in the governing of my creation that I've got charge of this universe and

God knows that Job has received wrong advice from his friends who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge there's a lot of words without knowledge uttered and then God speaks through the whirlwind chapter 40 verse 6 that the Lord spoke to Job out of the whirlwind what does he say in a nutshell he describes how humans do not know everything and he humbles Job by challenging him with a series of questions that really only God can answer have you understood the expanse of the earth tell me if you know all this it brings him to an understanding that believers don't always know what God is doing in their lives and in the end Job answers God saying I have declared that which I did not understand then at the close of the book we see God blessed Job with twice as much as he had before his trials began so we can learn from

Job's story that suffering is not a sign of God's absence now some would think and some say this today some preachers some faith preachers say things like you don't have material blessing because you're not godly enough or you're not following Jesus because if you follow Jesus you're going to have wealth health and prosperity and everything's going to be lavished upon you but that's not true brothers and sisters we can be poor in this world rich in faith amen there's some people here today who that is true of don't have too much to rub together but they're rich in faith that's what matters isn't it and our material wealth or health even or what possessions or affluence we might have is irrelevant it's not necessarily that that is a sign of God's blessing or presence with us because

God does work through brokenness and suffering Job knew some things he knew the saving power of God he knew how to truly worship and he sought after God in prayer and repentance God got a hold of him at the end of the book where we see he came to the end of himself and he started to put his trust more squarely in God and he trusted he obeyed he submitted to God's will whether he understood it or not!

[32:54] God and that's how we need to come unto him and we will find God in the midst of our trials sometimes even because of our trials we'll be closer to him and we see 42 verses 5 and 6 God's greatness and glory Job says I've heard of you I've heard about you but now my eyes see you he saw clearly the vision had been clarified he saw things more clearly he saw God in a more greater clarity and he says wherefore I abhor myself I repent in dust and ashes he says I've come to the end of myself and I repent so ultimately Job emerged with a deeper understanding of the almighty and of himself and of human nature and brother sister you might feel

I'm having a bit of a Job experience right now maybe it's the number one on the scale but it feels like I'm going through something I'm going through some suffering some pain some grief bring it to God bring it unto him Job perseveres he perseveres what a witness to us maybe Job's suffering is just so that I heard one preacher put it so that one day when we ultimately do meet Job we'll say we'll shake his hand or give him a hug and we'll say thanks Job it really helped me your book what you went through helped me it helped me with my story with my life with my struggles and he was faithful as much as he was fallible as much as he was frail as much as there was times he was crying out from the depths of his being because he was very human yet we see that he got through in verse 10 of 42 we see the Lord turned the captivity of

Job here he is he repenting in dust and ashes we see the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before so we see the Lord restored Job's losses when when he prayed for his friends he learnt to really pray to get to the place of prayer and verse 13 12 13 the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning for he had 14,000 sheep 6,000 camels a thousand yoke of oxen a thousand she asses also seven sons and three daughters everything was returned and multiplied he still had really had 14 sons and daughters because he was going to see the other seven one day and so we see the blessing of Job and the ultimate end of the story what a graphic account of God's faithfulness of Job's faithfulness the testimony of God to the glory of God of a faith that endures brother sister patience the patience of Job we see that just in closing we see James tell us of this in James 5 10 and 11 we know elsewhere it reads that these things were written for our learning

James tells us you've had it spoken of the prophet spoken in the name of the Lord the example of the suffering of affliction and of patience and we count them happy which endure ye have heard of the patience of Job you've heard about Job you've heard about his patience his perseverance his endurance you've heard about the patience of Job and have seen the end of the Lord that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy God shows great pity and compassion and tender mercy Job's account tells you brother sister God is sovereign he's in charge Satan could do no more to Job than God allowed and no matter what may touch your life or mine or the lives of our loved ones God is in control even if we do not understand what is happening and perhaps really

Job really didn't get all his answers that side of eternity he may not have had really a full understanding a full explanation of what it all meant but yet he learnt to trust in the Lord God's ways are higher than our ways they're beyond our ways his wisdom is infinite he's the creator and governor of the universe and we're just a little speck in the cosmos of it all God's vantage point is eternal he sees the beyond this life and we must learn to trust him learn to trust him for what he knows what is best for our benefit and for his glory when human wisdom fails we can trust in him when human hope and perspective fails we can press through because we can trust his perspective God is able he is after all the almighty the almighty can you love and trust him and serve him and realize who he is that he is in charge that all we have is due unto him and he is worthy of our love of our devotion no matter what happens no matter what goes wrong if that be his will suffering can be one of the unfathomable things of life a mystery a puzzle that we may never really comprehend but live leave your life in

[39:01] God's hands understand that in this lifetime what happens to us in life God does not owe an explanation to us for he is sovereign and through the book Job gets bitter he gets despondent yes he's very human but ultimately faith is the victory faith is the victory what does it mean for us trust him trust his leading even in difficult times suffering comes before glory glory the Lord restored everything may we submit to

the supremacy the sovereignty of God to find a place of humility as Job did to live in the fear of God trusting him no matter the circumstances now it's a telling thought really isn't it I think what else is going to go wrong I've just got some scabbling creature in the roof keeping me awake all night it's just number one on the scale what's going to be next and for you for me for us trust

God no matter what no matter what the circumstances the storms of life will come maybe there's a storm on tomorrow oh we live in a broken world it could happen things could get hard for you you know as a preacher as a minister you sometimes see people that are going through the ringer you see them at the worst of times sitting at their bedside in a hospital you see the suffering the the hurting the tears the hardness of life trust him still the storms of life will come because we live in a broken world but the Lord is our strength our strength and song our redeemer and he's worthy of our praise apart from the blessings that he provides so don't just praise him when it's a good time praise him all the time in everything give thanks let's pray

Lord we thank you that Job tells us of your great mercy your kindness and love his patience his perseverance speaks to us still when we suffer and have testing and trial Lord help us to learn to trust you more to trust you more and ever more so when it gets deeper and harder that we trust you harder and stronger Lord I pray if there's any here present that have yet to trust in you that they might say I know my redeemer lives I know Jesus is my saviour and he's alive he's gained victory over sin and death and hell triumphant and this is the victory that overcomes the world even our faith that that trust will see us through whatever storms to sail we cannot be detoured from this great trust this great joy that you have saved us for time and eternity we thank you Lord in Jesus name Amen