

Refined by Fire: Lessons from Job's Crucible of Faith | Suffering, Worship & God's Purpose in Pain

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[0 : 00] Job refined by fire. Imagine losing everything. Your job, your health, your home, your family, in a single devastating day. Everything gone. Not as punishment but as refinement. God himself allowing the fire.

! That's Job's story. It's a story for anyone who has ever asked, God, why is this happening? And we don't always get the answer to that question. But we see in Job lots of lessons we can take on board.

It's a crucible for Job. It's a crucible that Job is in. A furnace, a refining fire. And think of a furnace, a refinement fire. It's where the metal, that raw metal is heated up until the impurities, the dross burn away.

I know I'd like to tell a story how where my family and I lived in Mount Isa at one time and at the smelter there they would take the molten metal, really it was the dross, all of it, but it was in this big truck and at night they would wheel it out and pour it into a holding place.

And people would go and watch the pouring of it and people had to be careful because when it poured out of the great big basin on the back of this truck, it would shoot up these sparks and great big eruption would happen.

[1 : 44] And you see in the book of Job really this fire, this picture of a furnace, of a refiner's fire where the raw metal is heated and those impurities, that dross is then burnt away.

And what is left? Pure gold. Stronger, brighter, fit for the crown of the king. Job's life is a picture there, this truth here of how God doesn't waste your pain. He uses it to refine you.

And it might be easy to say that sometimes that it actually does happen, but that God can use even those painful things of our life to refine us, the making of us. And God's people are not kept from the fire, but God's people are refined through the fire.

There's that process that happens. And in a way, Job's story, the focus isn't really on the suffering so much as that there's a purpose to it, that God allows the fire and what emerges from the fire. So firstly, we see that this gold is being made, but really the gold is already there. The gold is there before the flame. In Job, right from chapter 1, verse 1 in the book, Job 1, verse 1, it reads, In other words, he shunned evil.

[3 : 33] He was a man of God. He feared God and he shunned evil. Job wasn't just rich. He was righteous, respected, real.

He was the real deal. And Job, he had seven sons, three daughters, thousands of animals and many servants. His greatest treasure, though, was his worship.

He was already a gold quality believer. His greatest treasure was his worship. And Job was this man of integrity, of intercession. At every family feast, he would get up and pray early that day for his children.

He acted as a family priest. It tells there of how he offered sacrifices for his children. In Job 1, verse 5, we're just skipping through some of the more prominent thoughts about Job and the crucible.

It tells there, Job 1, verse 5, that he had this thought, It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts. And it says of this service, this worship, this interceding, it says Job did this continually.

[4 : 47] He did it continually. And that word continually, it says it all, doesn't it? Job, faithful before the fire. Job prayed before the crisis.

He didn't wait for the crisis. He was praying before the crisis. He was praying as a natural thing to do. To do it day after day, to pray. And continually so.

He didn't serve God for blessings. He served God as worship. He had that heart to worship. To continually worship. What about you and me?

Do we wait for the crisis before we pray? Rather to pray before the crisis, before the fire. And real godliness shows up when no one's watching.

And this is what happened with Job. He was already a prayerful man. And real godliness stays when everything falls apart, as we see in his story further on.

[5 : 44] So we see there that the gold was before the flame. Already there was gold. But then the test was to come. As we see as the book unfolds, Job 1 verse 8, the scene shifts to heaven.

And Job appears there in the story. And then we go to heaven and we see Satan appear before God. And the Lord himself says to Satan, he says, Hast thou considered my servant Job?

That's Job chapter 1 verse 8. Hast thou considered my servant Job? That there is none like him in the earth. A perfect and upright man. One that feareth God and escheweth evil.

But Satan sneers at such a statement. And he says this. Doth Job fear God for naught? Hast thou not made a 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. But put forth thine hand now and touch all that he hath.

[6 : 54] And he will curse thee to thy face. Satan here is accusing Job of serving God only for the blessings. Only in the good times.

Do we serve God because he is worthy? Or only when life is comfortable? Satan had the thought that Job would react and curse God when trouble came.

God allows the test to happen. But he sets limits. You see that in chapter 1 verse 12. God says to Satan, All that he hath is in thy power.

Only upon him himself put not forth thine hand. He says do not lay a finger on him. But you can touch what he has. And then what happens next?

In one devastating day, Job loses everything. His wealth, his workers, all ten of his children gone.

[8 : 00] How devastating that would be. And then comes this stunning moment. What does he do? In Job 1 verse 20, Then Job arose and rent his mantle.

He tore his clothes. And he shaved his head. It was this sign of grief. And he fell down upon the ground and worshipped. 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.

So notice in particular verse 20 there. Job's reaction to this disaster. It says that he fell down upon the ground and worshipped.

He collapses there in the dust. Grief stricken, yet still God focused. No rage, no blame. Just worship in the wreckage.

[8 : 59] He worships immediately. It's the first thing he does is to worship. He didn't understand why. He had no answers, but he still trusted.

So Job's reaction was to worship. He fell down upon the ground and worshipped. He acknowledges God's right to give and take.

Everything. Every breath. Every possession. Every relationship. Worship. And you see what an example of worship right here. Worship here.

It means whispering his name. Praising God through your tears. While the smoke is still rising. You can imagine it was still a disaster scene.

And we could apply that too. Can we worship even in the emergency room? Worship even in the quiet of an empty house after a loved one's funeral?

[10 : 00] To fall down upon the ground and worship. And it records of Job, verse 22 there. In all this, Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

What an example for us. And here's the crucible of Job. And the fire doesn't create your character. It reveals it. We'll have those crucible moments too. He was already God. But we see the revelation of his character.

When the tough time came. His faith holds. And Job's worship was not built upon the blessings that he had. It was built upon the blesser.

The one who gave it. Satan accused that Job was covered and protected by this hedge. What about when the hedge comes down, as it were?

[11 : 00] When the security goes. We have tough things happen. Ill health. Our comforts are stripped away. Will we be like Job?

He says, blessed. Blessed be the name of the Lord. He still gave praise. Will you worship God only when he gives?

Or also when he takes away? Faith that only sings in sunshine will faint in the storm. God wants us to have a faith that we'll still worship. Worship in the tough things.

Now Satan expected cursing out of Job's mouth. But Job offered worship. That was a real slap in the face to the devil, wasn't it? He thought that Job would curse.

But no, Job praised. Now we read on. The fire gets hotter. Chapter 2. And Satan comes back. And he asked to strike Job's body.

[12:02] Again, God permits. But he sets a boundary. The Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand. But save his life.

What happens next? Painful boils erupt. From head to toe. And Job now sits there in the ashes. Scraping his sores with broken pieces of pottery.

What a ghastly thought that would be. The itching. The crawling feeling. The sores erupting. You can imagine.

And this mighty man now, he's unrecognisable. He's disfigured. He's despised. He's isolated. On the ash heap of the town. Treated like a leper.

His own wife now comes. And her heart is shattered. Now you could really, in a way, feel sorry for Mrs. Job.

[13:05] Because sure enough, she was hurting too. But she speaks for the devil. When she says, Dost thou still retain thine integrity?

Curse God and die. Satan whispers again. Through the voice of Mrs. Job. Give up. End it.

Throw it in. But Job answers, Shall we receive good at the hand of God? And shall we not receive evil? Job's wife says, Curse God and die.

He says, Trust God and live. And scripture adds again, In all this, Did not Job sin? With his lips. He didn't curse God. He kept praising. He held on. Sure, he lamented. He groaned. You see the human side of Job. But he didn't turn bitter.

[14:07] And sometimes worship weeps. Well, we don't understand what's happening. But we still worship. Praise persists, Even in pain.

It's almost like God's helped me to prepare this sermon Because I've got a bit of pain in my body right now. It's like pain. It persists sometimes. But you can still praise, can't you?

Even when pain's happening, You can identify with that. I'm sure some hear that. We can have that time where worship weeps. There's the earthen vessel feeling that we have Of our frailties.

But we can still praise. Through the pain. Faith doesn't mean you never cry. It means that when you do, You can still look upwards to heaven. You can still look unto your Lord.

And you see the integrity here of Job. In the ashes. On this ash pile. It means worship.

[15:10] Even when you don't understand. When you wonder why. Praising God. When you're barely able to breathe. Here's the picture of it. When your health fails.

When sorrow crushes. Disappointment happens. And you wonder. Oh. It hurts Lord. But you can still praise him.

You can still trust him. And Job shows that. Worship can weep. And still be worship. God will receive your worship. Even while you're crying.

Worshipping him. Moving on. We see. The wrestling. Of Job. With the refiner. He wrestles with God. He's striving. To understand.

To get to some. Answers. In all of the questions. That's happening. And. You could say. He didn't really. Necessarily get all the answers.

[16:11] Not this side. Of glory. And that can be true for us too. We may not get all the answers. Of life's complexities. Of disappointments. Of tragedy. But here he is wrestling.

With the refiner. With the refiner. With the almighty. And then Job's friends. Show up. His friends. Eliphaz. Bildad.

And Zophar. And they sit with him. For a week. And they say nothing. A week of silence. And then they speak. And their words are cruel.

These men. And they say. And they say. These men. Eliphaz. You could say. He was the elder visionary. Bildad. The traditionalist.

And Zophar. The moralist. They all had different characteristics. All of them had good intentions. Bad theology.

[17:09] Their message. If you suffer. You must have sinned. Put all the blame on Job. If you suffer. Well it's your fault. You've sinned. But Job knows his conscience is clear.

He doesn't deny his weakness. Sure. He's weak. He's a sinner. But he rejects this false guilt. It's not about that. That wasn't the point. And Job.

He doesn't argue with God. But he cries out to him. As we see here. Job 23. Oh. That I knew where I might find him. He wanted to find God.

In the circumstance. He wanted to reach out. In the confusion. In the fog. Oh. That I might find him. And then comes the gold. Job 23.

10. But he knoweth the way that I take. When he hath tried me. I shall come forth as gold. There's a cry of faith there.

[18:06] There's that. Assurance of faith there. He knows what's happening. And when he has tried me. Gold's going to come out of all of this. I shall come forth as gold.

And another. Testimony of faith there. Of Job 13. 15. Though he slay me. Yet. Will I trust in him. I will trust in him.

No matter what. And so we see the striving. Going on here of Job. The wrestling with his maker. The potter with the clay. You can question God.

But you just. Don't quit on him. There's times where you question. And there's all the complexities. And. All the puzzles of life.

Isn't there. Think. Why did I have to go through that. That. One day. We'll understand. By and by. We'll understand. And.

[19:04] Job here. He wrestles. He grieves. He questions. He. Struggles. Yet. He never turns away. As a wrestling. But.

In a way. It's his honest prayers. It's his honest prayers. That. In the dark here. You can see the brightest gold. Is coming through. That he's praying through. He's praying through.

In this. Time of. Murkiness. Of confusion. And. There's honest prayers here. In what he's. Crying out for. And it's like that for all of us.

Isn't it. When we have life's. Troubles. When friends may misunderstand. When our prayers feel like they've got. Not getting answered.

Hold fast. God is not absent. He's refining. God's doing a work. He knoweth the way that I take. He already knows the way we're going to take.

[20:01] Before we even get there. He's already there. In your tomorrow. God is not absent. He's refining. He's doing something. And. We can trust him. Even though we don't understand.

And we see the crucible here. This furnace. This refining time. It's exposing what's real. He's. Refining you. It's a good thing to be refined.

He's making gold. And gold doesn't fear the furnace. It's the dross that burns away. What's going to burn up? Hey. You don't need that anyway. That's just the dross.

That'll just get scooped off. And thrown away. The dross. But the gold will remain. And then you see the next section. That God speaks.

The refiner. The refiner speaks. And really at the back end of the book here. Of course we skip through. A whole lot. Of. Conversation. And just to keep to the nub of it.

[20:59] From chapter 38 to 42. You see the refiner speaks. Now God speaks direct with Job. And he answers from the whirlwind. And he poses this question here.

Job 38 verse 4. Where was thou? When I laid the foundations of the earth? What a question. What do you really know? We know nothing.

Makes me think of this one. When we're talking to someone at the door. And they think. The sign says. Where were you? Where were you when God made the earth?

How dare you say anything that you know? Where was thou? When I laid the foundations of the earth. When God made it.

There's a piece of dust. That dares to say there's no God. That dares to say there's no creator. Where was thou? When I laid the foundations of the earth.

[21:59] God doesn't explain Job's pain. But he reveals himself. He reveals his power. His sovereignty. His wisdom. His power. He reveals himself. And he reminds Job.

That he rules the seas. The stars. The beasts. It's all in his control. And you see the descriptions of. His creation. In the various chapters.

It talks about God's majesty. Of his. Making of. The planet of everything. And how. Ultimately. Really.

Job. Realizes then. That God is not accountable to man. Rather. Man is upheld by God. We're at. The creator's mercy.

Aren't we? And so. Here. Job. Faced with God's majesty. His perspective. Shifts completely. And he confesses. I have heard of thee.

[22 : 58] By the hearing of the ear. But now mine eyes. Seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself. And repent in dust and ashes. He gets the perspective right. Who am I?

I'm just. This. This speck. Before the almighty God. And. Who am I? Before. The great. Creator. And now he emerges with refined faith. Not despite the fire. But because of it. The fire helped him.

He came for answers. And he found God. And sometimes God's presence is the ultimate answer. Isn't it? That Job. Comes face to face.

With the almighty God. He comes to realize. Who he is. In the context. Of. Creation. And he sees God's presence.

[23 : 55] It's the ultimate answer to. Every question. And then what happens? The Lord restores Job. Double. His possessions. New children. Renewed joy.

But the greater blessing is not in wealth. But in knowing God. He had a greater knowledge of God. He had a greater relationship with his saviour.

And Job knows the God who walks through the fire with us. So some lessons we could take from all of this. From the fire of Job.

Lessons from Job's fire. We could think for ourselves. Brother, sister. Maybe it's real for you today. You're in your own ashes. There's a health crisis.

There's a broken relationship. There's deep grief. There's an anchor here. That we can know God is real. And he's sovereign over suffering even.

[24 : 51] Nothing touches you without his permission. And his purpose. And worship is your superpower. When hell expects curses.

Lift up a sacrifice of praise. Don't be like Mrs. Job. Curse God and die. No. Praise God and live. Praise God and live. It's life.

It's a sacrifice of praise. Even when it hurts. Even when it feels like I'm stretching out more than I can give. The sacrifice of praise. And God's silence also is not his absence.

Sometimes he lets us stew and wait. And he's refining you. He's not abandoning you. Let's be patient. For God to take his time about it.

And know this too. That your redeemer lives. Your redeemer lives. Praise God. Job 19.25. It's really a victory cry.

[25 : 54] Where Job says. For I know. That my redeemer live. That he shall stand at the latter day. Upon the earth. It's his victory cry. And of Job.

James writes. You have heard of the patience of Job. The patience of Job. And you have seen the end of the Lord. That the Lord is very pitiful. And of tender mercy. The patience of Job.

It means the steadfast endurance of the man. Enduring steadfastly. Under fire. The patience of Job. It's what he became known for.

And Paul praises in Romans 5. Verses 3 to 4. How tribulation. Worketh patience. Or endurance. Leading to character.

Or experience. To hope. It's the building blocks. Here isn't it. Tribulation. Patience. Experience.

[26 : 53] Hope. He's building character. He's making you. And tribulation. Depression. Is. The starting point. Whatever you're going through. Could it be chronic pain?

Maybe it's depression. Of loss. Something's happened. That's been devastating. Here's your anchor. Man of God here tonight. Woman of God here tonight.

Here's your anchor. My flesh and my heart faileth. But God is the strength of my heart. And my portion forever. He's everything to me. He's everything to me.

When my heart fails. When my flesh fails. God is the strength. Of my heart. He's not going to fail me. Integrity means your praise.

Outlast your pain. Really. Life's little troubles. Are just a short moment. Aren't they? Just an eye blink. Of space of time.

[27 : 47] But God is my portion. And he's forever. Forever. And so you can praise. And your praise is going to outlast your pain. Not because the pain is gone.

You can praise him. While you're in pain. Because the one you praise. Remains. He's going to remain. Beyond your pain. And like Job.

You may not have answers. But you can still have pain. He's my portion forever. When you're in a financial. Relational. Or emotional.

Crucible. You have that moment where. You wonder what's going on. When healing is delayed. When your prayers seem unanswered. You can cling to your Redeemer.

Cling to him. And knowing that. He's going to make all things new. And you're going to look back in eternity. At this little moment. At this little phase.

[28 : 46] This little. Season. Of trouble. Of earthly trouble. And we're going to look back. When these words are true for us. Revelation 21.

And God shall wipe away all tears. From their eyes. And there shall be no more death. Neither sorrow. Nor crying. Neither shall there be any more pain. For the former things are passed away. Gone. Poof. And he that sat upon the throne said. Behold. I make all things new. The one who's going to make all things new. It'll seem.

Insignificant then. Won't it? For the meantime. In loss. Bless his name. In confusion. Seek his face. Be like Job. I want to know him.

I want to. I want to find him. And in the storm. Yield your will to his grace. Yield your will to. Thy will. Be done. My grace.

[29 : 42] Is sufficient. Yield to him in that storm. And know that God's burning away. While you're in that crucible time. That furnace time. Hey there's pain happening. He's going to help you to shine.

He's going to burn away. What's stopping you from shining. And you can say with Job. As it reads in 121. Of Job. The Lord gave. And the Lord.

Have taken away. Blessed be. The name of the Lord. He knows what he's doing. And there's three questions we could pose. We could ask of ourselves.

When we're in a fire. What's your foundation? Can you say. Everything that I have is on loan. And God is still good. He's given me.

He's taken away. Well it's all his anyway. All that I have. He's given it. Anyway. If he wants to take it. That's his. Anyway. Everything is on loan.

[30 : 39] And God is still good. What's your foundation? Now naked came I. And I'm going to go out the same way. You know. What does it matter. If I might lose this or that.

What's your foundation? And then what's your first reaction. When crisis comes. What are you going to do. When trouble hits. Do you curse. Question.

Or worship. Worship. Job. Fell on his face. And he worshiped. First thing that he did. The first reaction. And you might say.

Preacher. It's easy for you to say. I'm not saying it's going to be easy. But worship. Worship anyway. Worship like Job worship. Worship immediately.

Go to God. When trouble comes. Go to God. Let that be your first response. And think. Thirdly. What gold is God after. In you.

[31 : 36] Is the dross that he's burning. What's the dross. Could it be pride. Could it be. Self-reliance. Could it be. A faith that depends on.

Comforts. What if we were in Sudan. At the moment. Nigeria. Does our faith depend on comfort. Or are we going to be like Job.

He's given me. He's taken it away. I'm going to bless his name anyway. Here's all that matters. And the dross. Let him take it. Let him take all of it.

I don't need it. And it's not good for me. Let God take the dross. And so you see the fire here. It's not a random thing. There's a purpose.

A refinement happening. And we don't always realise that at the time. When we're in the furnace. When we're in the crucible. When it's. That pain is going on.

[32 : 35] There's a refinement with purpose. God's dealing with the dross. And it's for our betterment. What stands out about Job. Isn't that he never broke.

It's that when everything else did. His worship didn't. He kept on praising. And when he hath tried me. I shall come forth as gold.

When God tries you. You will. Come forth as gold. I shall. He could confess it by faith. When God tries you. You will.

Come forth as gold. Not Sunday. Not maybe. You will. It's a promise. Because the refiner never ever fails.

Let us pray. Lord we thank you that. Job tells us about pain. And Lord of suffering. But more so of worship. Of trust. Of faith.

[33 : 31] Lord help us to have the faith that. Braves the fire. And sees the refining. As your purpose. Even. Whilst we don't understand. All of it.

Give us grace Lord. We pray each one here. May know. I know that my redeemer liveth. They know that they're saved. They know that they've got a redeemer.

Life's troubles are hard enough. But even harder for the unsaved. Pray that each one might know what it is. To know the redeemer. To know that he's alive. He's conquered death and hell.

He broke out of that tomb. And he is forever alive. Even praying for us. Even now. Lord we pray that each one might know the redeemer. Know the salvation.

That is by faith. Through God's grace. Lord give us that peace. Lord that peace that goes through the pain. That praise that goes through the pain. And keeps on praising.

[34 : 30] Lord give us that wisdom from above. To know your hand is even working. And what you're taking away is dross anyway.

Lord be glorified we pray. Pray that we would come forth as gold. As gold that's fit for the crown of the king. The king of kings and the lord of lords.

To be such a gold quality believer. Give us the grace to see your hand. In all of life's tests. And not to lose heart.

That our immediate response would be to worship. Even when we don't want to. Lord we glorify your name. And thank you for all these things. In Jesus name. Amen.

Amen.