

# Why is this happening to me?

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Preacher: Steve Jeffrey

[ 0 : 00 ] This is not a sermon on Job 6. This is a sermon on Job 3 to 27, probably. So you might need to be able to flick quickly.

So grab a Bible if one's there. If not, at very least, grab a piece of paper and a pen to be able to write down the references so you can flick through it a little bit later. Let's pray.

Father God, we again thank you for your revelation to us in your word and the revelation that we have, final revelation that we have in Christ.

Lord, when this world doesn't make a lot of sense and we can't understand your sovereign hand, we pray that we might, like Job, look to our Redeemer and to realise, Lord, that you are the just God who will vindicate in the end.

You're the God who will bring justice. And so, Lord, I pray that in the meantime that we might have wisdom and that we might be people of faith. And we ask it now as we look at your word again.

[ 1 : 12 ] Amen. We pray that you would come and that you would speak so that your people might be strengthened in Christ and that we might treasure him above all else.

And we ask it for your sake. Amen. In Colorado in 1995, a police officer arrived at a single car accident where a car ended up on its roof and with a baby girl pinned under the car which was sinking into the mud.

And the officer lifted the car and the mother pulled the girl out from the mud. People have been known to do those sorts of things, to lift incredible weights after an accident and then later to collapse under the shock of what's happened.

There's also the case where the helicopter from the TV show Magnum P.I., if you remember Tom Selleck from years ago. This is a generation that will understand who Tom Selleck is.

It crashed in 1988 and it pinned the pilot in shallow water and one of the pilot's burly friends, a guy named Tiny, ran over and lifted the one-ton helicopter enough to pull the pilot out.

[ 2 : 37 ] People have been known in that moment of tragedy to lift incredible weights. There's a spiritual parallel to tragedy here. In the moment of tragedy, when a Christian has been given the grace to faithfully be able to say, the Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.

And then later on to realise what it means in day-to-day, week-by-week existence to in fact could collapse in dismay over time.

You see, there's one thing to bear a sudden tragedy with your rush of adrenaline and clear thinking. It's quite another to suffer weeks, months, years of pain.

Job 1 and 2 reveal that in one afternoon, Job lost his 10 children and all his wealth and shortly afterwards, he was afflicted with a terrible disease and in both these tragedies, he kept his faith.

1.21 says, The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord. And then in chapter 2, verse 10, he says, Shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil?

[ 3 : 56 ] He affirmed God's control over everything and he bowed in humble submission. But Job's faith and his reverence towards God were not rewarded with a quick healing of his disease.

In chapter 7, he says this in verses 2 to 3, Like a slave who longs for the shadow and like a hailing who longs for his wages, so I am allotted months of emptiness and nights of misery are apportioned to me.

Job's misery had dragged on for months and now the Job who stood firm in chapters 1 and 2 seem to be completely rocked as you move into chapter 3.

Chapter 3, verse 1. This is after he's been silent and after he has said, The Lord has given, the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord. The next thing he says, he opens his mouth and

he cursed the day of his birth.

He said, May the day of my birth perish and the night it was said, a boy is born. That day may it turn to darkness. May God above not care about it.

[ 5 : 19 ] May no light shine upon it. And then down in verse 11, Why did I not perish at birth and die as I came from the womb? And 23, Why is life given to a man whose way is hidden, whom God has hedged in?

For sighing comes to me instead of food. My groans pour out like water. This is a different Job than the one we discovered last week in chapters 1 and 2.

It almost seems here that his faith is gone. He wishes he is dead. And so now we come to the Job who says, Why? Why the suffering?

Where's the justice? Where's the vindication in this world? And so what we're going to do this morning is we're going to look at, you know, basically chapters 3 to 27, you know, very broadly. And what we enter into here is the huge section of Job where he's debating his three mates, the guys who turned up at the end of chapter 2. After hearing Job say that he wished he'd never been born, each of his friends jump in to explain to Job why he's suffering the way he is.

[ 6 : 39 ] So Eliphaz goes first and then Job replies to him. Then Bildad goes next, Job replies to him. And then Zophar goes last and Job replies to him. And the whole cycle is repeated twice and the debate comes to a gridlock as both sides refuse to budge.

And so the big chunk of Job is quite repetitive. Job's friends sitting a little way off and they hear what Job has to say when he sounds off about his grief and his anguish in chapter 3.

And basically you could sum up the main section of Job is that they all basically say the same kind of thing. They serve up theologically rigid answers seasoned with a bit of a condemning spirit.

That's kind of what they do. They are partly correct and so they are unwise. What we discover here is in our search for wisdom a lack of wisdom.

Their basic position is summed up nicely by Eliphaz in chapter 4 verse 7 to 8 where he poses a question. Consider now who being innocent has ever perished?

[ 8 : 02 ] Where were the upright ever destroyed? As I have observed those who plough evil and those who sow trouble reap it.

See his idea? Job you've done something wrong to deserve this sort of suffering. Their basic position is you reap what you sow and there is truth in it.

We looked at it last week. That is proverbial wisdom. That is the wisdom of the Proverbs. But it is never meant to be applied as a rigid rule. There are plenty of people who sow evil and never seem to reap it.

They just go on from strength to strength and there are those who never seem to get a break from misery. Good people who seem to never get a break from misery.

And Job's friends have taken this generalization and have made it a rule. They have concluded that because Job is reaping over here then he is sowed over there. So let me illustrate it for you.

[ 9 : 08 ] I did this very quickly last week. I'll do it again. Proverbs 24 verses 33 and 34 says this. A little sleep and a little slumber a little folding of the hands to rest and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.

basically if you are lazy then you can expect to be poor. That's a fairly general principle.

It's a fair enough kind of principle. However, it's totally at a place to conclude that just because somebody is poor then they must have been lazy. Just because they are reaping poverty doesn't mean that they've sown it through laziness.

and you know take refugees for example. That would be a really inappropriate application for those who are living in a shantytown somewhere escaping war from another country.

And this is what Job's friends have done. They have reduced God and his actions to their ability to grasp order in the world. They forgot to take into account the mystery of God.

[ 10 : 25 ] We don't know everything. We can't know everything. We won't know everything. Which is one reason why humility is a really good stance to take day by day. And Job's friends also show little compassion in the way they spoke of his character.

Eliphaz makes a sly swipe of Job in chapter 4 verse 5. But now trouble comes to you and you are discouraged. It strikes you and you are dismayed. You see this is what he's saying is Job the sufferer.

You used to be Job the righteous man who used to offer advice and help people who were suffering. And Eliphaz's charge here is more than one of just inconsistency. In verse 6 he says, should not your piety be your confidence and your blameless ways your hope? If you put both those verses together what Eliphaz is saying here it's a real nasty sarcasm. It's even more than a nasty sarcasm. He's actually accusing Job of rank hypocrisy. But there's also a note of self-righteousness as he accuses Job of rank hypocrisy.

[11:40] In chapter 5 verse 8 Eliphaz says, but if it were I, I would appeal to God. I would lay my cause before him.

In other words I would make the same mistake you're making Job. I would recognise God as the one who is capable of restoring me.

I would shut my mouth. I would confess my sins and I would plead for my deliverance. And you see more of it in chapter 5 verses 17 and onwards. Blessed is the man whom God corrects.

So do not despise the discipline of the Almighty. In other words Job, if you just confess your sin and plead for God's mercy then you will be restored.

Then his mate Bildad has a crack in chapter 8 verse 6 He is saying that because God has not restored you Job to your rightful place that is the place where a righteous person lives the good life again the proverbial wisdom coming out here and because he has not restored you then you are clearly impure and unrighteous.

[13:11] Again a crack on his integrity. Then number three Zophar stands up and weighs in and he really weighs in. He reckons Job's suffering is much less than he in fact actually deserves.

Take it on the chin Job because you deserve a lot worse than this. He's saying that Job's sin is so great that God has forgotten some of it.

He says this in chapter 11 verse 11 Surely he God is recognises deceitful men and when he sees evil does not he take note?

So Job is deceitful and evil. He really just tears his character to shreds and so in chapter 6 which was just read out to us Job responds to his friend Eliphaz Job never throughout the book never claims sinless perfection.

In verses 1 to 13 of chapter 6 are Job's declaration of his innocence and his desire to die. Such was his torment.

[14:28] Such was the load he felt. He just wishes he was dead. And in the second half of the chapter verses 14 to 30 are Job's words to his careless friends.

Job actually resents his friend's lack of compassion. So verse 14 a despairing man should have the devotion of his friends even though he forsakes the fear of the almighty.

But my brothers are undependable as intermittent streams as the streams that overflow. flow. They are fickle.

They are undependable. I cannot trust the words coming out of my friends mouths. Job is saying no matter what I say and what I do you are my mates.

But he says you are like those puddles of water that form really quickly in the heavy rain but which disappear in the sand. They're gone. They're here one moment gone. The next. Instead of being dependable and a source of hope and life in a desert you're fickle and you bring no hope no comfort.

[15:50] And Job's plea here to his friends is quite emotional and quite pitiable in verse 28. But now be so kind as to look at me.

Just look at me. would I lie to your face that is by hiding this evil and sinful life that you accuse me of? Relent.

Do not be unjust. Reconsider for my integrity is at stake. He's saying to his friends guys you've got it all wrong. Your understanding of God is too neat.

You've taken away all the mystery. And so the result is their counsel is both naive and cruel. The God of their neat theology would not allow someone to suffer unless they deserved it and because Job is suffering he must have deserved it.

Something happens with Job from chapter 3 right throughout the course of this debate with his friends which is quite profound here.

[17:04] We know in chapter 1 and 2 the Lord gave the Lord has taken away blessed be the name of the Lord. Chapter 3 he says I wish I was dead. He cries out against the wisdom of God in giving him birth.

The duration of his disease and his tragedy has almost defeated the initial stand of faith in chapters 1 and 2 but from chapter 3 all the way through to chapter 19 there is this little by little gaining and regaining of the faith of Job until you get to chapter 19 and his faith breaks out in victory.

In every speech up until then Job has expressed the conviction that he would certainly die in misery. He longs for it but then there is a gradual change in the way he talks about his dying.

At first in chapter 7 verses 9 to 10 during his response to Eliphaz he is sure that death is the end of everything. as the cloud vanishes and is gone so one who goes down to the grave does not return he will never come back to his house again.

That's it death is what waits me and death is the end. That is there is not even anything good to look for after death. And as he responds to Bildad in chapter 10 verses 20 to 22 he is still sunk in despair about death.

[ 18 : 51 ] Are not my few days almost over? Turn away from me so I can have a moment's joy before I go to the place of no return. To the land of gloom and utter darkness to the land of deepest night of utter darkness and disorder where even the light is like darkness.

Then in his response to Zophar in chapter 14 verses 7 to 14 he again faces the certainty of death in suffering and he cries out to be released to die in verse 13.

But this time he asks a question in verse 14. If someone dies will they live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait for my renewal to come.

And again in a second response to Eliphaz in chapter 17 verses 13 to 16 the reference to the place of the dead is one of question rather than despair.

And then in chapter 19 verse 25 Job reaches an answer and the victory comes. I know that my redeemer lives.

[ 20 : 14 ] God and that in the end he will stand on the earth and after my skin has been destroyed yet in my flesh I will see God.

I myself will see him with my own eyes, I and not another, how my heart yearns within me. There's the victory.

My redeemer lives and I will see God face to face. Death is not the end. Job is finally sure that beyond the grave he will meet God as his vindicator and not as an angry judge.

He will be vindicated from all his suffering. Even if it will only be after death, even if it's to suffer for the rest of his life, he knows that vindication will come in the end.

There will be life and light and not death and darkness. The victory for Job is in his redeemer, in his vindicator. Someone who can stand before God and plead his case.

[ 21 : 22 ] He realized his friends weren't going to do it. No one else will stand with him. He even raised the possibility of a need for a mediator between God and himself back in chapter 9 verse 33.

And then in chapter 17 verse 3, Job thought that he himself might be the person who will stand before God and vindicate himself. And now he realizes he needs someone else.

Someone else who won't be crushed by God's awesome power. Someone that can approach God without fear that their sin is going to exclude them from the presence of God.

Someone who can present to God Job's struggles and to ask God to have mercy on Job. Someone on the inside who pleads with God for Job.

Who took his struggles to God and who represented Job to God. And Job says, that is my only avenue to God's justice is my redeemer who lives.

[ 22 : 30 ] God is my love. God is my love. Interestingly enough though, this confidence in a redeemer does not answer all of Job's questions about his suffering.

It doesn't solve all of his theological problems. He is still totally confused as to why he should have to suffer as he does.

And even though he has a confidence in his redeemer, his suffering goes right on. But Job's confidence of new life after death does enable him to hold on to three of his convictions.

The sovereign power of God, the goodness and justice of God, and the faithfulness of his own heart. God and with those convictions he holds out against the simplistic doctrine of justice from the mouth of his three friends.

I was in a library the other day, Bible College library, and the section on Job was huge.

[ 23 : 52 ] So I feel quite encouraged to be able to not cover all the bases when I looked at the section on Job.

And so there's at least a couple of things that I want us to pick up, acknowledging that it's not everything and not that I can nail everything. Let's just pick up a few things. Firstly, there is order in this world, but we don't see it all. We don't see it all. And so suffering and prosperity are not distributed in the world in proportion to the evil or good that a person does. And so to be wise is not to judge one another before the time. That's one element of wisdom. To not judge one another before the time. And the time is the end of time. That's the time. Those who suffer may be the best and those who prosper may be the worst amongst us.

[ 25 : 09 ] Secondly, God reigns over all the affairs of people, from the greatest to the smallest. and one of the most common means used by people today to solve the mystery of suffering, inevitably, is the limitation of God.

That's how we generally solve it. Particularly the limitation of God's sovereign control over all things. That is, God couldn't have willed that sickness or that explosion or the death of that child. He must not be in control. He's a limited God. Let me tell you that for Job and his three friends, that never occurred to them as an option.

On either side of the camp, it never occurred to them. The common ground of Job and his three friends is that God reigns. He's sovereign.

And no solution to the problem of suffering that questions this, that is God's sovereignty, will ever satisfy in the long run.

[ 26 : 23 ] But we tend to limit God in an attempt to alleviate the pain of suffering. We think that if we can comprehend why suffering happens, then by default, that will limit or alleviate the pain of suffering.

And so in an attempt to explain suffering, ultimately we limit the sovereignty of God or the goodness of God.

And it will never alleviate the pain of suffering. suffering. You bring God down and all of a sudden we are just random.

And that never alleviates the pain of suffering. Thirdly, true theology should lead to love and humility.

If you take most of the statements of Job's friends separately, it sounds like good theology. And on most part, it is.

[ 27 : 42 ] But their application is shallow and insensitive. In fact, the proverbial wisdom that they lean on itself warns against such an application of proverbial wisdom.

wisdom. It says this in Proverbs 26, verse 9, like a thorn bush in a drunkard's hand is a proverb in the mouth of a fool.

His mates weren't wise. Their advice wasn't trustworthy. There is a wrong application of proverbial wisdom, so let us be warm friends.

Good theology does not make you wise. Good theology can be made false and destructive in the way it is applied.

Good theology does not make you wise and it does not make you trustworthy. Knowledge puffs up and love builds up.

[ 28 : 49 ] All our correct theology is meant to result in humility and love, not arrogance. love. God should help us to see that, that we only know in part.

We are limited. Even after the revelation of Christ, we are still limited. Wisdom is not knowing everything, it is in relationship with the God who knows everything.

humility and love must be the application and it must accompany the application of our theology.

Job's friends would have done well to practice the old saying, let love stand as a watchman at the gate of your mouth. love. 1 Corinthians 13 tells me that even this side of the cross we do not see clearly.

Verse 12 of 1 Corinthians 13. Knowing of course 1 Corinthians 13 is the great chapter of love. Now we shall see, now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror, then we shall see face to face.

[ 29 : 58 ] Now I know in part, then I shall know fully even as I am fully known but now these three remain, faith, hope and love and the greatest of these is love.

We don't see clearly, we don't know everything and so I'd love us to be known as a church that holds theological conviction with humility and love, with a steadfast faith and a redeemer in the face of uncertainty and a firm hope for the future in the middle of calamity.

There is one thing that we can say with certainty and that is that our redeemer lives. Over it all, hold fast to the redeemer, look to the redeemer, treasure the redeemer who knows and will bring vindication and justice and in the end, faith in the redeemer and wisdom go together. and so in the middle of calamity and we're standing beside someone, may we put our arm around them and say I don't know why this happens but let me point you to the redeemer because he lives. Cling to the redeemer, he lives and he will bring vindication in the end. So let me finish with the words of Hebrews 4.14.

[ 31 : 24 ] Therefore, since we have a great high priest, a great advocate, a mediator, a redeemer who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess for we do not have a high priest that is a mediator, a redeemer who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses but we have one who is being tempted in every way just as we are yet was without sin.

Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. Amen.