

# Keynotes from Tim Gamston's am Sermon on 6/03/2022 Series in Job: "Seeing God through suffering"

## Part 1: "The rarest billionaire"

Text: Job 1 v 1-5

### Scripture references from the ESV

**Job 1:1-5** There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil. <sup>2</sup> There were born to him seven sons and three daughters. <sup>3</sup> He possessed 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 female donkeys, and very many servants, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the east. <sup>4</sup> His sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one on his day, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. <sup>5</sup> And when the days of the feast had run their course, Job would send and consecrate them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, "It may be that my children have sinned, and cursed<sup>[a]</sup> God in their hearts." Thus Job did continually.

**Please read the whole chapter in your Bible.**

The world that we live in is full of suffering, both on a global scale (the current war in Ukraine for example) and on a personal level (sickness, marriage break ups and so on). There is also great beauty that is found around us in creation, in human creativity and in the love that is shown in billions of acts of kindness worldwide.

Every human being experiences suffering in various degrees, regardless of age, race and wealth. Within our congregation, there is unlikely to be anyone who hasn't experienced some kind of trouble in the past or isn't currently experiencing trouble.

We read in Job: **Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward (5:7).**

We ask questions as a result of this suffering:

- What is the explanation for it? Why does suffering exist alongside the beauty that we see?
- How does suffering fit with morality? Is it just the luck of the draw or is it punishment for wrongdoing? Why do seemingly good people suffer horrendously and bad people escape?

- How does belief in God relate to suffering? If God is good, why does he allow suffering? If he is all-powerful, why doesn't he stop suffering? Who actually controls the universe – God, Satan or humans? Will God do anything about the suffering in the world?

If you are currently experiencing suffering, your questions may be more personal.

- Why me and when will it stop?
- How am I meant to respond to my suffering?
- What does my response to my suffering reveal about me, my beliefs and my relationship with God?

To try to make sense of some of those questions, over the next few weeks we are going to look at what God has to say about suffering. We will look at human wisdom and see how it draws wrong conclusions. We will seek to understand suffering from the vantage point of heaven as we study the book of Job. It is a book given to us by God as part of scripture – God's word breathed out for us. It is a book that takes

**an honest look at the man who lost everything.**

Without a right and healthy understanding of suffering in God's world, our faith will crumble. We won't have confidence in God when suffering comes, or experience the joy in suffering that confidence in God produces. For many people, experiencing suffering leads to a denial of the existence of God, and hence a loss of faith.

The book of Job shows us the journey of one man as he and his friends try to make sense of his suffering and wrestle with the justice of God. It is the journey of a man who suffered the loss of everything and arrived, not at a place of atheism, but at a place of seeing God more clearly.

**This book is the journey of a man who saw God through suffering.**

**It is not just his story. It is also our story and it is the story of Jesus.**

The first few verses of the book introduce us to this man called Job, and tell us six things about him which we need to understand if we are going to understand the rest of the book.

1. **He is a man (v1).** Whilst apparently obvious, this is also very significant. The original Hebrew says: 'A man there was...' The emphasis is on the fact that Job

was a human being like us, though he probably suffered more than we will ever suffer.

**He wasn't superhuman. He was one of us.**

2. **He is a located man (v1).** He lived in the land of Uz. It was a real place (also mentioned in the book of Lamentations) but it certainly wasn't in the Promised Land. His story does not synchronize with the history of Israel., and it would appear that Job lived before Israel became a nation. He was probably around at the time of Abraham, but he had no knowledge of God's promise to Abraham, the exodus of Israel from Egypt, the Law of Moses or the conquest of the land of Canaan.
  - He knew almost nothing of God and yet what he does know of God leads him to fear, worship and obey God. If, despite his limited knowledge, he was able to journey through suffering and come out trusting in God, **then we, who now have the complete revelation of God to us in his Word, will find ourselves enabled to come through our suffering trusting in God.**
3. **He is a family man (v2).** Job was blessed with seven sons – the perfect number according to Ruth and Hannah elsewhere in scripture. Not only that, but he also had three daughters.

**Job has the perfect family.**

4. **He is a wealthy man (v3).** Job is a farmer with a huge stock of animals, a huge farm and a huge staff to manage the farm. He was not an insignificant nomad, but a great man in his world.

**Job is the equivalent of our billionaires**

5. **He is a blameless man (v1).** It is remarkable that this can be said about him. Jesus warns us that riches can be a huge hindrance to people coming to know God. (**Matt 19:24, 6:24** see p4). Despite his wealth, Job was a man whose heart was directed towards God.
  - Though not sinless, he was blameless. He dealt with people honestly and with justice and integrity.

- He feared God, not with dread, but with a reverence that led to loving worship and obedience.
- He was a moral man – **he turned away from evil (v1)** and towards God in repentance.

Later, we will see that Job knew that God was the creator of the world, and ran it with justice. That belief in the justice of God will be tested by the fire of suffering.

**Job was a man of personal integrity who feared God and lived a life of repentance**  
Yet the dark cloud of sin could be seen on the horizon.

**6. He is a concerned man (vv4-5).** We see Job's blamelessness in the way he is concerned for his children. He is not concerned about any temporal issues, but rather for their godliness, even though they are adult children, living in their own homes. After family gatherings, Job would send for them and offer a sacrifice (**v5**). He was so concerned that his children might have, even inadvertently, acted as if God were dead that he made atonement for their sin, burning an animal as a sacrifice. This is a picture of the great wrath of God against sin falling, not on his children, but on a substitute. Those of us who have children can learn from this. We may not sacrifice animals to atone for their sin, **but we can and should sacrifice time to pray for them.**

**This is Job, the man we are going to sit with as he comes to know God through his suffering.**

We can look at Job and miss who we're meant to be looking at. Though we can rightly draw conclusions from Job's life, the whole purpose of this book is to help us see God, especially in the midst of our suffering. As we go through this book of Job and through our own suffering, there are two things that we should **not** do.

**1) We shouldn't trust in riches.** Job is an example of someone who was rich and righteous but he is rare in the world of the rich. He really is **the rarest billionaire**. The Bible warns us against riches because they can take our heart away from God, and become the thing we trust. Jesus warned us about the danger that wealth and possessions pose to our soul. (**Matt 6:24** see p4). We,

in this part of the world, are rich. **Psalm 62:10** warns: **If riches increase, set not your heart on them.** We will see that Job has a heart that is set on God, not on riches, and that his faith, though severely tested, withstood the fires of affliction.

**Job had faith in God and not in his riches.**

**We, too, need to keep trusting in God in the midst of suffering.**

**2) We shouldn't miss Christ.** The book of Job is our story too, and the story of all human life on earth. It is also the story of another man to whom Job points us.

**It is the story of the Lord Jesus Christ.**

- Job, a blameless man, made atonement for the sins of his children.
- Jesus, a truly sinless man, made atonement for our sin.

Despite God's good gifts to Job and his family, sin lurked in the hearts of children.

This is true for all of us. There is beauty all around us – the beauty of nature, friendship, family and kindness and

**all of that is because of the grace of God.**

The world is bad, but not as bad as it could be, because God graciously holds back evil and gives us good things. Yet despite this, sin still lurks in our hearts. We take the good gifts of God but we don't want God. We want to be first in our lives, and not have him ruling over us. We live as if God is dead, instead of fearing him and turning away from evil.

The Bible calls this sin, and it warrants the eternal wrath of God. God, in his mercy, has made provision for the wrath to fall on another instead of us.

- **Job offered an animal sacrifice for his children**, thus pointing forwards **Jesus who offered himself** up to death on a cross, so that the fire of God's judgement fell on him, rather than on those who put their trust in him
- Job had his wealth and health **taken** from him, but Jesus Christ voluntarily **made himself** poor by exchanging the splendour of heaven and the worship of angels for the guilt and shame of the cross so that we might be spiritually rich.

**Jesus Christ gave up his life to death on the cross**

so that you and I might be blameless in God's sight and inherit the riches of eternal life.

The book of Job points to a God who doesn't stand outside our suffering but enters into it.

He walks with us through the suffering and enables us to see him in a way that we never could have done without the suffering.

**Matthew 19:24** Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."

**Matthew 6:24** No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money