

## Singing the Song of Job

**Text:** Job 1.1–5

**Theme:** Our good and sovereign God is glorified through the reality of human suffering.

### Introduction — You sit on exam table, doctor's office

- robe is embarrassing, to say least
- room is cold
- doctor knocks, enters room, says, “I’m afraid I have bad news from your tests”
- how do you respond?

### Your on your way home from church one Sunday

- see dark smoke in far distance, think, “Oh, how sad; house fire for someone”
- as you draw closer to home, realize fire is close by also
- then you turn down your street only to discover house burning is yours
- by time fire is extinguished, essentially nothing left to salvage
- everything you called yours is gone
- how do you respond?

### Reality of suffering is common to us all

- no one is immune from it; to some degree, in some form, comes to everyone
- reality of suffering, problem of evil in this world: huge problem
- many use it as reason they refuse to believe in a good & all-powerful God

### God has provided us an entire book in His book to help us with this matter: Job

- some have asked, even one prominent Rabbi: why do bad things happen to good people?
- won’t find it here; sorry, not sorry, largely because entirely wrong question
- however, I believe it presents an even better picture than simply “why evil exists?”
- I believe Job will help you understand God far better & how to react when sufferings comes
- also, if you come to grasp main themes of Job, two things will happen:
  - 1) better equipped to deal with suffering when it hits home to you
  - 2) better equipped to help & minister to others when they suffer, for whatever reasons

### So, let’s take a 35,000-foot look at Job this morning

*First, let’s take...*

#### I. A LOOK AT THE BOOK

- 30–35 minutes, maybe less, to tell you what this book is all about: nearly impossible
- can’t do it in FB post, single tweet, Instagram graphic, short TikTok video
- takes a long journey—for us, eight Sundays—because no instant answer to hard questions
- so, take at slow pace...sort of
- if I wished to go deeper, would belike walking from East Coast to West Coast
- you know, right away, this is not going to be easy; why?

#### 1. Long book

- 42 chapters, one of longer books in all of Scripture
- 1070 verses and over 17,000 words!
- not simply a walk in the park when it comes to reading, for most of us

**2. It's poetry...ugh!**

- had to take poetry class in college to fulfill requirements
- dreaded it from very beginning; professor also quite flair for dramatic
- read variety of poets: Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Frost, and John Donne
- variety of styles: sonnets, ballads, songs, haiku, and free verse
- turned out to not be as bad as presupposed
- as I learned to understand it, I learned to enjoy it...mostly
- Job is like that: approach with dread—Hebrew poetry
- but when start to grasp use of imagery, parallels and more, comprehension grows

**3. Also, the subject matter...probably not our first choice: suffering**

- heavy topic, pressuring your own soul and personal experience
- if you have suffered, may bring back memories of that
- if currently suffering, some of Job's words will challenge you
- may rip scar tissue right off those old wounds and make them fresh again

**4. But also tremendously encouraging to read this book**

- it will build up your trust in an all-good and completely sovereign God
- it will reward you, not with answers to all questions, but with a look ahead
- this look ahead will be to One who suffered more than any other
- and this One loves us and even endured that suffering in our place

**5. Rapid fire questions about this book****• who wrote it? Short answer: God did**

- but God chose human author to tell Job's story
- other than that, we really have no idea who wrote it
- precise, historian like Luke
- also accomplished & skilled in wisdom literature, of which Job is part

**• when did these events take place?**

- once again, unclear; no precise date can be given
- but several reasons to believe during period of patriarchs: Abe, Ike, Jake, and Joe
- names of God match up, for one
- Job's lifespan also similar to those of Abraham and others

**• where did these things happen?**

- ah, at last, something definite can come from the book: the land of Uz
- wouldn't you like to be from Uz?
- problem: don't know where it was precisely
- probably northern Arabia, east of River Jordan
- so: not in the land of Canaan

**• how is this book structured?**

- may not be first question you ever ask, but important to this one
- starts with prologue and ends with epilogue
- in between: series of dialogues between Job & four friends
  - Bildad, Eliphaz, Zophar, and Elihu
- these dialogues are debates over roll of sin & suffering, godliness & blessing

- peak of book near end when God speaks
- ch 1–2 inform us of where this suffering comes from; may be surprise at answer
- ch. 3 is Job's lament, full of passion, pain
- ch. 4–27: back-and-forth speeches by Job & friends (some comforters they were!)
  - each friend tries to explain why Job is suffering
  - just a spoiler alert: God says they missed it on every point!
- ch. 28–31: sum up previous 23 chapters
- ch. 32–37: young Elihu enters the fray, hoping to bring wisdom to discussion
- ch. 38–41: it takes 37 chapters, but God finally speaks, breaking His silence
  - puts Job in the dock, brings heat in cross-examination style questions
  - all this manifests Job's very finite knowledge of matters
- ch. 42: epilogue to whole book
  - God renders His verdict of friends and Job
- **so, you can see there is a lot here**
  - plan will be to cover ch. 1 & 2, then 3
  - tackle all the dialogues of three initial friends in one fell swoop—yikes!
  - examine Job's summation and final words
  - then, we'll try to figure out if Elihu is correct or not as he speaks
  - could probably take several weeks on God's speeches, but distill it all into one
  - finally, bring it all home with God's summation and what He does to Job in end

*Well, that's a brief look at the book; now, let's take...*

## **II. A LOOK AT THE MAN**

- read Job 1.1–5

### **1. Job's character considered, v. 1**

- overall, these opening verses show man remarkably consistent in life of faith in God

#### **1) blameless**

- doesn't mean he is perfect; KJV is somewhat misleading using that word
- no, not perfect, but full of genuineness, sincerity of faith
- this is due to God's work in Job
- one mark of a "blameless" person is they aware of personal sin
- hurts, seeks God's forgiving grace
- blameless person knows great need of God and His righteousness
- this is who Job is and others of his day would have known this

#### **2) upright**

- word has to do more with how he treats & interacts with other people
- straightforward, straightforward talker, what-you-see-is-what-you-get type
- Job 31.13–23 give a very clear testimony of this trait of Job's

#### **3) feared God**

- Job filled with a humble piety
- honors God, worships God, offers sacrifices to God
- he gives thanks to God, refuses to sin against God
- this man knows God to be good, just, sovereign over all things

**4) turned away from evil**

- Job like man in Psalm 1
- doesn't walk in counsel of wicked
- refuses to stand in way of sinners
- absolutely will not sit in seat of scoffers against God
- this description should have been an answer to his friend's talks
- when Job sins, he confesses, repents, gives thanks to God for mercy
- if alive today, would say he makes use of ordinary means of grace
- lives *coram deo*—before the face of God

**2. Job is blessed, 2–3**

- consider this more next Lord's day
- blessed with quiver full of ten children
- as to possessions, few equals to Job
- clearly, Job man of great position, power, reputation
- in many ways, Job is like a king

**3. View of Job's heart, vv. 4–5**

- filled with faithful concern for his children
- when they got together to feast, Job had longing for their holiness & righteousness
- so, he would serve as a priest: offering sacrifices in their stead, interceding on behalf

*Good to take this look as we begin, but we must also be...*

**III. SEEING BEYOND JOB—A LOOK TO JESUS CHRIST**

- many things we will learn from Job
- one of which is this: book of Job is about Job

**1. Things to be learned**

- real person in space & time God gave to us so we could learn from him
- wisdom is contained in this book: God's Wisdom, make sure hear that capital "W"
- humility is to be had as well: we should all be like Job
- bowing before God in loving fear and turning away from evil of all sorts
- NT terms this: repenting and believing, hearing and heeding the gospel
- so, Job is about Job

**2. Tip my hand here about what else we need to see, however**

- Job, as addressed by God, humbles himself and learns, he repents when rebuked
- Job is a blameless believer who walks in fellowship with his Creator
- even so, he suffers terribly, no other words for what he undergoes
- we know, given insight in ch. 1 & 2: undeserved pain, darkness
- yet, in end he is vindicated
- Job is not punished, does not suffer due to some sin in his life

**3. therefore, Job is passionately & profoundly about Jesus**

- Christopher Ash, author of commentary on Psalms which Jim references often
- also wrote a delightful & exceedingly helpful commentary on Job
- points out that Job foreshadows Jesus in blamelessness and perseverance in suffering
- Jesus was the blameless believer par excellence and fulfills Job

- Job acts as priest, interceding for his children
- Jesus is our great High Priest, who always lives to intercede for us
- Job, with all his greatness and success, is still a sinner, though a great man
- Jesus completes this to perfection as the King who reigns in love over all things
- Job is not entirely without sin, especially when he speaks wrongfully of God's silence
- yet, he speaks about God and speaks God's word to his friends
- Jesus is the great Prophet, however, not just speaking God's words, but He is the Word
- and, at the cross of Christ, Jesus brings to climax drama, pain, suffering of even Job
- when Job feels forsaken, Jesus was even more so
- when Job declared a darkness over him in ch. 3, Jesus knew it all the more
- Job receives final vindication from God in ch. 42
- Jesus received it in His resurrection
- so, as we walk quickly through this book, looking at Job
- we will need to make sure our eyes are fixed ahead, as well, to see Jesus

### **Conclusion – Job is about every man and woman in Christ Jesus**

- as those in Christ, you and I are called to “take up our cross and follow in footsteps of Jesus”
- this will mean also stepping in footprints of Job
- blameless, upright, fearing God, turning from evil...and still knowing pain & suffering
- but, please, don't err by making this about you; I certainly won't make it about me
- no, this is all about God and His Only Begotten Son Jesus Christ
- in Christ, we have been declared justified, righteous in our union with Christ
- His active obedience and perfect sacrifice provide all we need for salvation
- but we will suffer on our way to that ultimate salvation in heaven one day
- in the meantime, we pray for God's grace to bow down
- bow down, especially in dark days, to the God who is God
- this is God who called to love, to trust, to serve and worship
- song of Job: Our good and sovereign God is glorified through the reality of human suffering.
- may you see the gospel's light in the midst of darkness