

Job 1-2 - Job: A Man of Suffering

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Calvary Chapel Ontario

I don't think I'm being overly dramatic when I say that the Book of Job is perhaps one of the most difficult books in the Bible to read. I think that it's difficult for a few different reasons.

Number one, it's 42 chapters of pretty much constant poetry. I don't think man was created to read that much poetry. It's just goes beyond our human capabilities, but there it is and I always found poetry kind of hard. When I was in high school and stuff and we were doing poetry and literature class I found it challenging to read and yet this is poetry. This is considered one of the poetic books of the Bible and it's a lot of poetry. These first couple of chapters are not but as we get into it after this time, we'll see that.

I think part of another part of the reason why this is a challenging book to read is because when you're reading all of the arguments between Job and his 3 friends, and then later on even that fourth young man who spoke up, they all sound legit.

I mean, have you ever read through that and you read what one says and you go, yeah, that's true. And then you read something the other guy says, you go, well, that's true too. And so you end up going what's the deal here?

I mean, I don't know if you're like me, but I like to find something that I can grab onto and hold onto and say, that's the truth. And yet it's difficult in the Book of Job because you tend to, you see their point sometimes. And you end up walking away going, I'm not really sure who's right here.

And then I think a third reason why reading through and studying through the Book of Job is challenging is that this book raises what is arguably the most challenging question that mankind has ever formulated, and that is, why does God allow suffering. And when He does, where is God?

This question has not only been asked, it has haunted some people and it has caused people to turn away from God. I'll just be flat out with you. And we're going to address those questions in this study concerning suffering, the presence of God, the sovereignty of God, and purpose of God in suffering. We're going to deal with those issues and hopefully we're going to deal with them head on.

And I trust that as we do, not only will you be encouraged about knowing what God wants to say to us through this book, but you'll also be better equipped when you're talking to people in the marketplace of life and the question comes up.

And somebody makes that statement that is so common today and has been for a long time. And they'll say, I don't know, I just struggle so much believing in a God who the Bible claims is good and yet allows such incredible suffering.

Next to Genesis and the creation story, Job is considered to be the oldest book in the Bible, as it relates to the events that are taking place here. It is believed that Job probably predates Abraham by a little bit, although there are many who believe that they perhaps lived even during the same time by exactly where that ends up, we're not really sure.

And there's another thing we don't know. We don't know who authored the book. There have been many people who've guessed but the fact of the matter is, we don't know.

What we do know is that many modern statements actually find their origin point in the Book of Job. Let me put some of these on the screen for you so you can see them with me.

- “The hair on my body stood up” (4:15b)
- “My life is a breath” (7:7a)
- “...by the skin of my teeth” (19:20b)
- “The root of the matter” (19:28b)
- “The land of the living” (28:13b)
- “Eyes to the blind... feet to the lame” (29:15)
- “Spit in my face” (30:10b)
- “Repent in dust and ashes” (42:6b)

For example, statements like, “*The hair on my body stood up*” which is very similar to the hair on the back of your neck standing up or something like that. “*My life is a breath*” is a quotation from this book. “*...by the skin of my teeth.*” We probably use that a lot, but that is actually referenced here in the Book of Job.

“*The root of the matter*” is another common phrase that you'll actually find in this book. “*The land of the living*” finds its origin point in Job. “*Eyes to the blind... feet to the lame*” is in the 29th chapter. “*Spit in my face.*” We don't

know exactly what the origin of that is before this book, but it occurs in this book. And then the idea of “*Repent (repenting) in dust and ashes*” actually occurs here in the Book of Job and people still say that today.

Oh, and there's one other statement in the Book of Job that Job that is actually quite famous, and that's because it occurs or appears in the very popular musical, Handel's Messiah and that is the statement, “*I know that my redeemer lives.*” And that is found right here in the Book of Job.

Martin Luther, the great reformer, was a big fan of the Book of Job. He believed that it was the most magnificent book in the entire of Scripture. Isn't that crazy? There you go.

I think you might also find it interesting to note that the apostle Paul quotes from Job in 1 Corinthians. In Ezekiel chapter 14, the man Job, is referenced as a historical figure. And he is also mentioned in James chapter 5 when James is making the point about patience.

As we've already mentioned, the Book of Job touches on just about everything related to the subject of suffering and that was important.

From a Jewish perspective, the Book of Job was an important one because one day the Jews would confront or be confronted by their suffering servant, the Messiah who would come and suffer for them on the cross. And you see, the Jews were very prone to the idea that suffering was always a byproduct of sin.

In fact, you'll remember on one particular occasion, the disciples of Jesus even came to Him when there was a man they saw who was blind and they asked Him, who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind this way. (John 9:2) And you'll remember that Jesus probably surprised them when He said neither this man nor his parents sinned, that he was born blind. (John 9:3)

Well, that was just the go to default response by the Jews when the issue of some kind of suffering was before them. They would simply default to the idea that wow... And we still do, we can still...

I've been caught by God, I mean literally busted by God thinking that as I'm looking at somebody who is in difficult circumstances. Just a momentary thought that courses through my mind that says something like, I wonder what they did to bring them to this place. And God has grabbed me a couple of times by the scruff of the neck and just said, hey there, young man. Young is relative to eternity. But what are you doing making that sort of a judgment.

The Book of Job reminds us that suffering can come into a person's life apart from any kind of specific sinful behavior, that, that suffering might be predicated upon, or a result of. And that was something that the Jews were supposed to get, I think. I think Job was an important lesson for them related to that. But there it is.

One other quick thing before we get into it. As we're going to see later, and much later actually in the book. There are actually several statements in the Book of Job which have been proven to be scientifically advanced. And what I mean by that is, advanced beyond the time in which it was written. At this time, science was greatly in the dark ages. And the understanding of the universe and other things related to the earth and so forth, had not yet been discovered.

And yet, as the Lord speaks to Job out of the whirlwind, He is going to make several statements to him only in recent scientific discovery have we been able to essentially understand. And let me put a few examples of this on the screen here for you.

- The evaporation-precipitation cycle (36:27, 28)
- Wind and weather directions (37:9, 17)
- Composition of the human body (33:6)
- Suspension of the earth in space (26:7)
- Ocean-bottom phenomena (38:16)
- Cloud-lightning relationship (37:11)
- The orbits of heavenly bodies and their influence upon the earth (38:32, 33)

Such as, **The evaporation and precipitation cycle**, which you might completely take for granted. Water evaporates, it goes up into the clouds, it precipitates again, down upon the earth. There it sits, the sun shines on it. It evaporates, once again, rises as a mist up into the clouds where this cycle of evaporation and precipitation. This isn't something that science has always understood. We understand it now, but it is mentioned in the Book of Job, way before scientists had recognized it.

Wind and weather directions, another thing. The **Composition of the human body** is mentioned in the Book of Job, way ahead of its time.

The **Suspension of the earth in space**. The Book of Job makes reference to the fact that the earth is essentially suspended in space. Various **Ocean-bottom phenomena, Cloud-lightning relationships, The orbits of heavenly bodies and their influence upon the earth**. Those things are mentioned in the Book of

Job. And yet, they are way ahead, shall we say, of any kind of scientific discoveries of their time. There's a bit of an introduction for you.

Let's get into the text of Job chapter 1, and let's begin reading there. It says, *“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.”* (ESV)

I want you to stop there for just a moment please. Based on what we read elsewhere in the Bible, it appears that Uz; this land that Job lived in, was located in what is now known as Edom, or would later on be known as Edom. It certainly wouldn't have, by that time. Edom hadn't been born, but it would be located somewhere south and east of Canaan, which, of course would then be later known as Israel, or the land of Israel.

And also, you'll notice in this very first verse of the Book of Job, we're introduced to the main character in our story. And it's a very positive introduction. Specifically, we're told that Job feared God and he was blameless. I want to talk about that for just a moment because a lot of people don't understand some of those terms. For example, fearing God.

This is not a kind of terror or cringing in fear. Many years ago I had a guy come up to me after a service after I referenced fearing God. And he really took me to task and said, it's not good that we might, that we would fear God.

Well, he was, interpreting fear as that cringing sort of, there's no way I'm going to even approach this God because I'm afraid of Him, sort of an idea. That's diaphobia, which is an unrealistic terror of God. And by the way, that's a phobia where people are just deathly afraid of God and it's a terrible thing to see in a person.

But that is not at all the biblical idea of what it means to fear God. The idea of fearing God is quite different, but it is different depending on whether you are a believer or an unbeliever.

If you are an unbeliever and you say you fear God, that would cause an individual like that, if they truly fear God, it would cause them to consider their actions and their sinful behaviors and to basically come to God and find some way of escape.

Because again, the idea of fearing God... Keep in mind that an unbeliever, I'm not referring to someone who doesn't believe in God. I'm talking about someone

who hasn't yet come to Christ and availed themselves of the benefits of the cross. So this person may very well believe in God and they actually fear God, but they haven't yet come to the cross for forgiveness. And so for them to fear God would be a sense of dread that my life is going to be judged one day by God, and maybe I should do something about that, alright?

Now, the fear of God as it relates to a believer takes on a decidedly a different tone and it's basically for the reason that they know that the penalty of their sin has been paid by Jesus on the cross. And so the idea of fearing God is not a sense of dread that they're going to be judged.

Because the believer knows that Jesus has already been judged. And so for them, judgment is a past event. It took place already, at the cross. And they believe that what Jesus said on the cross was real when He said, it is finished. And you guys know that means, paid in full, literally. The believer knows and understands that.

And so there's a different understanding as it relates to fearing in God. For them, fearing God, is a sense of understanding, God disciplines those whom He loves. The fear of God, it does still affect my behavior. Okay, just because I'm forgiven, and I know that Jesus died for me on the cross, doesn't mean that I get a get out of jail free card as it relates, or free pass as it relates to sin. Right?

It doesn't mean that I can go and, hey, I'm having a good old time here because, hey, I'm forgiven so I can just do anything I want to do, sort of a thing. No, as a believer, I understand, and I have a fear of God that relates to, God loves me, He's my Father, and if I'm in the wrong, He's going to discipline me.

He will do it out of love, mind you, but He will do it. And nobody likes to go to the woodshed, right? I never cared..., of course, my family didn't have a woodshed, but you understand the idea there behind that. No child likes to be disciplined by their parent and none of us likes to be disciplined by God.

But we understand that it's a principle that is connected to our relationship with Him, so a fear of God takes that into consideration. Hey, yes I'm forgiven at the cross, but God is still sovereignly overseeing my life and so forth.

Obviously, we will never more experience the danger of hell so that fear is gone. I would have to say that our fear as a believer is more a connection to a reverence and an awe. In fact, let me show you how the writer of the Book of Hebrews puts this, because I think this is so well said. He says,

Hebrews 12:28-29 (ESV)

Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.

Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.

Now, why would the writer of Hebrews say that to believers? “...our God is a consuming fire.” Listen, we aren't worried about the fire of hell but we do still understand that our God is a fearful God to behold. And we approach Him with then reverence and awe as we come to worship before Him.

We are comforted in the understanding that our salvation is secure in Jesus Christ. But again, that doesn't allow us the freedom. to live as we want. And then John also discusses this issue of fear in his first epistle when he writes this.

1 John 4:16-18 (ESV)

By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, (I hope you have confidence for the day of judgment) because as he is so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with (what) punishment, and whoever fears (as it relates to punishment) has not been perfected in love.

In other words, John is saying, if there is still a fearful expectation of judgment in you, you have not yet been perfected in the love of God as it relates to the cross and the forgiveness and mercy that is ours through Jesus Christ.

And that happens. That's why we have people who get saved repeatedly until they finally come to the place of just really, truly embracing the fact. And when I say get saved repeatedly, you know what I mean by that? You can't get saved repeatedly. You get saved once, but in their hearts and minds, they feel like they got to do it over and over again. It's like, they're not really confident that this thing took. And so they come down again. Hey, I need you to pray for me so that I can be saved. And so I go, wait a sec here, I remember you coming down

two weeks ago for the same thing. Yeah, I know, I'm just not confident that it really took hold, so I want to do it again.

That person hasn't yet been perfected in love. They haven't truly embraced the faith that what Jesus did on the cross was sufficient to take care of all of their sins. And their fear of God is at a place that it should not be. It's still in the place of almost like an unbeliever.

The other word that you'll notice here as it relates to Job that is used of him is the word, blameless. Did you catch that? This does not imply moral perfection, although I'll be honest with you, the Hebrew word can be translated, perfect instead of, blameless.

But basically it just means that Job was not a man who was liable to blame. He was careful in his dealings with God that whatever might have happened, he's going to leave nothing to chance. He's going to go and he's going to ask for forgiveness. And so we're going to see how his blamelessness plays out in the next few verses.

But again, in the larger context of what God was trying to communicate to the Jews through the Book of Job, by saying Job was blameless, was to communicate to them that the suffering that now is going to come into his life is not a byproduct of sin and the blame that would otherwise come from it. And again, that's something the Jews struggled to understand.

But you'll notice here, that God is repeatedly telling us, this man is blameless, He will do that through these first couple of chapters.

Verse 2, we're told here that, *"There were born to him seven sons and three daughters."* Now, if I were to say that to you about someone, hey, he's got seven sons and, you know, three daughters, you would say, whoa, big family.

In the ancient world, that was tantamount to saying this man is blessed by God. One son was a huge blessing, seven sons is a multiplied blessing. And the girls on top of it are an added blessing. And this is a way in the ancient world of declaring just how blessed this man was.

We're also told something that made a lot of sense back in those days and that was his material value. Look at verse 3. It says, *"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."* And once again, to enumerate a man's wealth through his servants and the number of

his cattle and sheep and so forth was a way of communicating once again the extraordinary blessed condition that belonged to the man Job.

Notice that it was greater than all the people of the East. He was the richest man, the most blessed man that you could find during that time. Do you see how God is painting the picture of this man Job for us?

Now, as we go into verse 4 in the following we're going to see an example of his blamelessness. It says, *"His sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one on his day, (and presumably that would refer to their birthdays) and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. ⁵ 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 God in their hearts." Thus Job did continually."*

In case you're wondering, these are the actions of a man who is called blameless. And you can see what it talks about here. Job was careful that no one, including God, could lay blame at his doorstep, even for things that he didn't do, even for things that his children might have done.

And so we're told here that at least 7 times a year, unless some of these boys were twins, at least 7 times a year, he would offer up burnt offerings just in case any of them had sinned. He wasn't personally aware of anything that had happened. He's simply saying, it might've happened and so we're going to cover our bases.

I don't know if that sounds ridiculous to you, but honestly, I don't think that it is for a couple of different reasons. Number 1, Jesus taught us when the disciples came to Him and said, teach us how to pray. He taught us to bring those things before the Lord, forgive us as we forgive others, forgive us. (Matthew 6:12)

That was supposed to be a regular part of our prayerful time to God. Hey God, I need to be forgiven. And sometimes you might say, well, I don't really pray that all that often because I'm not really aware of anything specifically necessarily that I've done wrong or that I really need to ask for forgiveness of. Do you understand the difference between that attitude and Job? Job wasn't aware either, but he didn't just offer up a quick prayer.

He put together a whole sacrificial sort of a deal, where he would offer up these burnt offerings to God related to his children and what they might have done.

That's a very careful man, but it's a man who's careful to be blameless, and that's the point behind it.

But there's another reason why this is a good thing for us to hear that Job did and it has to do with when we get together with family. I don't know if you've noticed, but sometimes, when we get together with family, we tend to let our hair down in ways that sometimes isn't quite so good. We're so comfortable with family members, we don't feel like we have to say anything special or do anything special.

This is just family, we can burp in front of them and say things that we probably wouldn't say or perhaps even do things. Talk about people in ways that we might not be willing to talk about people when we're with those who are non-family members.

And remember here now what's going on. Job's family, his kids, would get together to feast on their birthdays, and it was during that time that Job chose to make sure there was a sacrifice just in case they might have sinned. I think Job knew and understood something about that kind of familial connection that we have with those in our families when we come together.

Let me share with you on the screen here something C.H. Spurgeon wrote about this. Look at this.

“What the patriarch did early in the morning, after the family festivities, it will be well for the believer to do for himself ere he rests tonight. Amid the cheerfulness of household gatherings it is easy to slide into sinful levities, and to forget our avowed character as Christians. It ought not to be so, but so it is, that our days of feasting are very seldom days of sanctified enjoyment, but too frequently degenerate into unhallowed mirth. Alas! for our poor hearts, that facts prove that the house of mourning is better than the house of feasting.”

—C.H. Spurgeon

“What the patriarch did early in the morning, after the family festivities, (he says) it will be well for the believer to do for himself ere he rests tonight. Amid the cheerfulness of household gatherings it is easy to slide into sinful levities, and to forget our avowed character as Christians. It ought not to be so, but so it is, that our days of feasting are very seldom days of sanctified enjoyment, but too frequently degenerate into unhallowed mirth. Alas! for our poor hearts, that facts prove that the house of mourning is better than the house of feasting.”

—C.H. Spurgeon

As it says in the Book of Proverbs, I believe. Anyway, I read guys like Spurgeon, and it's kind of fun to read a 19th century author/preacher because, they kind of talk funny. But beyond that is the reality of what he's saying and I think there's something for us to think about.

By the way, there's something else I just want to bring up about Job before we move on and that is the incredible rarity that the man is. Because we've already been told something. We've been told that he was incredibly blessed. Meaning he was amazingly wealthy. I mean, the guy was filthy rich.

How many filthy rich people do you know? Well, do you know at all, but do you also know who are also individuals who care about what God even thinks. It is an incredible rarity for a very wealthy individual to be concerned about being blameless before God? Most just don't care. Most don't give God a second thought.

You'll remember what Jesus said to His disciples. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 19:24) Why? They just are so full of themselves and full of the blessings of life that they honestly just don't see their need of God, and they don't reach out to Him.

But here's Job, a man of great wealth. In fact, it says, the greatest of all the men of the East and he is a man who has a heart for God and desires to be right with God. Even when he isn't aware that anything wrong has been done. I find that amazing.

Now, as we come to verse 6, you're going to notice that the scene of our story changes drastically. We're going to go from earth to heaven, and we're going to deal here with some spiritual realities.

And it begins in verse 6 by saying, *“Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them.”* Alright, we've got some things we've got to deal with here.

First of all is the term, *“sons of God.”* Bənē hā'Ēlōhīm, is a general term in the Hebrew that basically refers to children of God. In this case, it is referring to spiritual beings. And you'll notice that I didn't just say angels, because when we say angels, we typically think of the angels who are at the beck and call of God to do His will and so on and so forth.

There are, however, other spiritual beings who technically would qualify as angels but are, in fact, demonic spirits. Satan being the leader of those, who is also among them. And here he is referred to by the name Satan, which in the Hebrew means, accuser, and that's exactly what we're going to see him do to Job as he accuses Job to God.

Now, the other question that people ask when they read this verse is, they'll say, what in the world is Satan doing coming before God in heaven? I thought Satan was cast out of heaven. I thought Satan lost his place in heaven as we've been told and so forth, and what is he doing here?

Well, the fact is Satan has officially lost his place in heaven, but several passages in scripture, this being one of them shows us that he still has access to heaven, and he will appear before God from time to time to accuse God's people. And that's what we're going to see him doing here and that's what we see him doing elsewhere in the scripture, so here we go.

The first to speak is the Lord. *“⁷ The Lord said to Satan, “From where have you come?” Satan answered the Lord and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.””*

Sometimes you think, you ask the question, well, where is Satan? Well, I don't know, I think he's in this hot place, sort of thing, there's fire, and he's like tending the fires, and I guess it's where, he's in hell, I guess.

Listen, Satan is here on the earth, and even as he says to the Lord here, he was on the earth, walking to and fro. In other words, moving across the...

Now, Peter tells us when we get to the New Testament what he was up to, walking around on the earth. Let me show you this passage from 1 Peter chapter 5 verse 8. He says,

1 Peter 5:8 (ESV)

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

That's what he's doing. He's not walking around looking for a good Mexican restaurant. He's *“seeking someone to devour.”* That's why Satan is moving back

and forth upon the earth. Remember that always. Satan comes to steal, to kill, and to destroy. (John 10:10) Alright?

“⁸ And the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?””

Isn't that great? This is right from the lips of God. Earlier we heard it from the author of this book. Now we've heard it from the mouth of God. When God says that you're upright and blameless, you're upright and blameless. If I say you're upright and blameless, I could just be like, I don't know, buttering the bread on both sides because I want to ask a favor of you or something. I'm flattering you, perhaps, by saying, hey, you're an upright and blameless man, or you're a good guy. I don't have the authority.

God has the authority. He is the Supreme Court. When God says you're doing good, you're doing good.

And Satan is going to respond here, verse 9. *“Then Satan answered the Lord and said, “Does Job fear God for no reason? ¹⁰ Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.””*

In other words, what Satan is saying to God is, of course he loves you, who wouldn't love you? You take care of him. You're good to him. Notice he says, you have *“a hedge around him.”* You know what does that mean? It means you're protecting him, you've got him hemmed in. I can't get to him. Of course he loves you.

Notice what he's doing. He's accusing Job to God. Of course he loves you, but he has ulterior motives to love you. Of course. Right?

And then he goes on. Verse 11. *“But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, (I guarantee you God) and he will curse you to your face.”* In other words, take away some of his stuff. Some of this stuff you've blessed him with, that he likes so much. And I'll tell you, this man, this blameless man of yours, he'll spit in your face. He'll want nothing more to do with you. Quite a challenge, huh?

Why is it, do you suppose, people, that Satan challenges God this way? Why is it? Why does he do this? Have you ever thought about that? Why does he say it?

Could it be because Satan knows where most people live? Could it be because if we're honest with ourselves, we would admit that, yeah, there are people who are in a relationship with God for what they can get out of it. And when what they feel they should be getting out of it, they're not getting out of it, they will pack up and leave. Could it be that is the case?

Here's the point. Satan knows human nature better than you and I. He's been dealing with it and messing with it for a long long time. Remember, Satan's been around a lot longer than either you or I or all of us put together.

He knows human nature. He knows how we perk and he knows that this is the fact of the matter. That there are people who have met God and even for a while done well with God, only to come up against some situation in life where something very dear to them is taken from them. And that person will turn around and curse God to His face, just like Satan said that they would.

It's interesting, I've often been fascinated by the parable of the sower. Because Jesus gives us in that parable, insights that you and I would otherwise not understand. We look at people who come to the Lord and we ask ourselves the question. Are they going to grow and if so, why?

Have you ever noticed that some people will come to church and they'll hang out in church for a while and they're really excited while they're here. And they're here for a month or 2 or even 6 months or whatever and then after a while you just they just go away.

And it's not that they started going to another church, they stopped going to church altogether. They stopped reading their Bible. They stopped praying. It's just done. It's over and we're like, what in the world?

Well the parable of the sower, answers the questions for you and I about what happens. Jesus gave us that parable to explain that there are circumstances that will often come into play that will cause people to just throw in the towel and just pitch it and say I'm done.

You'll remember that in one particular case, Jesus talked about seed that is planted in, for what otherwise would be good soil except for the fact that it's full of seeds that are going to grow up and become weeds. And so, the good seed of whatever the crop that's being sown is there in the ground with these other seeds and they both grow up together. And what happens? The weeds choke out the grain so that it literally stops growing. What is that a symbol or a picture of?

Well, Jesus told us it's a picture of those individuals who grow up and they're excited and they're like, yeah Jesus is really cool. But it says hardship and persecution come into their lives and they pitch it. They're like, I'm done. I didn't sign up for this junk. I thought this Jesus guy was going to be my friend.

And hardship, and difficulty, and challenges, begin to face them and sometimes those hardships come in the form of things that are taken from their lives. The difficulty they see sometimes in their life. Sometimes they take up an offense for somebody else who had something taken from their life. And you look at it and you go, I can't understand why God took that person's little boy who was 5 years old or something and he died of this terrible disease. Why would God do something like that? And they get angry and they're like, I'm done with this thing. It gets choked.

You see, this statement that Satan is making before God related to Job is not a baseless sort of a challenge. This is reality, you guys. This is one of the reasons we come together as the body of Christ. Is to encourage one another, to support one another, to pray for one another so that when the difficulties of life happen, we can stand.

Paul talks about it in the Book of Ephesians. When the day of evil comes, be able to take your stand. (Ephesians 6:13) Because you know what the day of evil is all about. Satan wants to take you out. Wants to remove you.

Don't let it happen. Stay in fellowship. Stay connected to the body of Christ. Stay in the Word, and so forth. We'll deal with a lot more of this sort of a thing as we move on.

Notice God's response in verse 12. *“And the Lord said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has (notice that, all that he has) is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand.” So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.”*

Did you notice there, the Lord gave Satan permission to affect the things that belong to Job. Did you catch that? I bring that up, and I think it's an important thing to understand. It's vital, in fact, that we understand that Satan could not touch anything belonging to Job without God's expressed permission. Why do I bring that up?

Well, I bring it up for the simple fact that there are many believers who somehow have embraced the idea that Satan has some kind of free, unlimited, access to all of our lives. That he at any time can come in and just, do whatever

he wants. Come in and pillage and whatever else. And honestly, that's just not true.

Yes, we're told to be aware of Satan's wiles. Yes, we're told to do spiritual warfare from time to time. But the idea that Satan has unlimited access to our lives is not true.

You'll remember at the Last Supper, Jesus told Peter that Satan asked to sift him as wheat; to sift Peter as wheat. Remember when Jesus said that to him? He said, Peter, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. (Luke 22:31) He couldn't just waltz into Peter's life and do as he wanted. He had to ask permission.

And then there's a wonderful passage in 1 John that I think a lot of Christians either miss, neglect, or something. And it goes like this.

1 John 5:18 (ESV)

We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.

We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God (and that's referring to Jesus) protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.

Now that's an important verse for you and I to understand as it relates to Satan. Because that tells you and I that Satan does not have unlimited access to our lives because we are being protected on an ongoing way by the one who was born of God, meaning Jesus Christ. And now, since we are born of God, we are being protected by Him.

Let's keep going. Verse 13. *“Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, ¹⁴ and there came a messenger to Job and said, “The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, ¹⁵ and the Sabians fell upon them and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”*

¹⁶ *While he was yet speaking, (notice that he is not even done telling his tale of woe, it says) there came another and said, “The fire of God fell from heaven (I love how that's mentioned here. You and I know this is a work of the enemy but it is characterized here as, The fire of God fell from heaven) and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you.” (and) ¹⁷ While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, “The Chaldeans formed three groups and made a raid on the camels and took them*

and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”

¹⁸ While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, “Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, ¹⁹ and behold, a great wind came across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead, and I alone have escaped to tell you.””

Can you imagine? I can't. I mean, these things, to even have them happen in one man's life is almost unthinkable. But then to hear about these happening in a day and the information in the news of these happenings coming to Job one on top of the other before he even has time to process the fullness of what is being said, yet another messenger comes along with more bad news.

And I don't know how you would respond in a situation like that. I don't know how I would respond, honestly, in a situation like that. What I'm amazed at is the way Job responds.

And it's given to us in verse 20 in your Bible. And it says, *“Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and...”* Cursed God.

Doesn't say that, does it? That's what Satan said he would do. What does it say? It says, he *“...worshipped”* God.

People, please don't mistake the difference between praise and worship. Job is not giving thanks for what he has just heard and to worship God is not necessarily to give thanks.

We worship God because He's worthy of our worship, of our adoration. But what is amazing about this is that in the midst of these terrible things, when the vast majority of people would do exactly what Satan said Job would do. And they would turn to God and they would scream at the top of their lungs and never give Him a second thought except to hate Him.

That is the time when Job falls upon his face and begins to worship his God. And it really truly is amazing. But what Job is doing here by worshiping, he is declaring that God remains worthy of his life, even in the face of these things.

People, we could talk about this for weeks. I won't, but we could go on and talk about this for a long time. When difficult things happen to you, is God still

worthy of your worship? You and I know that the answer to that theological question is yes. Great, you get it right. What happens though, when it really takes place in your life?

Friday comes, and you are called into the boss's office, only to find that they're letting you go. How much are you going to feel like going to church on Sunday and worshipping God? When you know that job took you a long time to get, you finally got a job that paid a decent wage. And you know that there are not that many jobs to be had and now you're facing a long extended search process that is probably going to get you into financial difficulty because there's no more savings. There's no more nothing. You've only got what you've got.

So you're going to go to church and worship God. You're going to go lift your hands. The fact of the matter is, I think the vast majority of us would probably take a weekend and say we needed to just get ourselves put together here a little bit because oh, life's been hard this last week.

Fact of the matter is, we're not really sure if we're happy with God. And we're not sure if He deserves us coming to church and paying Him all kinds of special attention when what we've just had happen to us is we've lost our job. And that's just obviously one example.

I want you to notice what else Job said, and this is an amazing thing. Verse 21, he says, *“And he said, “Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”*²² *In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.”*

That statement is pretty amazing, isn't it? Job is basically saying, you know what? When I was born, I didn't have anything in my pockets. I didn't even have any pockets. I was naked. I had no possessions in my hand. I had nothing. I had nothing.

Everything I ever received in life, God gave me it was His to give. It was His to take away. It's not mine to say, that's wrong God. Notice it says here. He did not charge God with wrong.

That's what we do, you see when we get angry with God and we say you took that from me. The fact of the matter is He gave it to you in the first place. It was His to give and it was His to take away. We don't think that way. That's mine. It's mine. Hands off God, this belongs to me. That's the fact.

Job 2, very quickly. *“Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the Lord. ² And the Lord said to Satan, “From where have you come?” Satan answered the Lord and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.”*

³ And the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason.”

⁴ Then Satan answered the Lord and said, “Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. ⁵ But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face.””

Again, Satan is accusing Job to God, this time insinuating that Job would gladly give everything that he had ever been given, if he could only keep his own flesh. And again, the statement is probably not without some merit of truth as it relates to the way people think. In some cases, I think we do continue to worship God because it affects us positively. And so he's basically telling him, hey, strike him personally.

“⁶ And the Lord said to Satan, “Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life.” And I want you to take note of what God said to Satan. *“...spare his life.”*

Now, Job didn't hear that. He wasn't privy to that little comment. Well, he wasn't privy to the whole conversation. The point is, he did not hear God say to Satan, *“...spare his life.”*

And what he is about to be given in terms of physical suffering, I believe that Job assumed that it would probably be something that would linger in his life to the point of eventually taking his life completely and so forth. It goes on.

“⁷ So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. (which is a way of saying, over his entire body) ⁸ And he took a piece of broken pottery with which to scrape himself while he sat in the ashes.”

Again, here's a man who has lost everything. He was the richest man, the most powerful man in the East, and big family. Lots of possessions, well known, glorious life. It's all gone. It's all gone. Kids are dead. Belongings stolen or destroyed. Right? It's all gone. And now he is inflicted with a physical ailment

for which I believe Job probably assumed from which he would die. And now, what is he to do? He's sitting literally in an ash heap, scraping his sores, presumably to get some kind of relief from them and there you go.

By the way, here's an important point. This is the last time we hear from Satan, basically. And isn't that just the way it goes? Satan comes to do his dirty stuff, and then he goes. He's gone.

And you and I hear of somebody like Job, who's gone through a terrible situation, who's gone through a difficult circumstance. And like Job's friends, we might make our way over to our friends and see all the difficulty that they're going through. And we look at this and we go, oh, look what Satan has done. And we gather around them because we feel like we need to do spiritual warfare for this family.

There's only one problem. Satan's down the road. He's done, he's finished. He's not even heard from again at least in Job's life. And that's often the case I find with believers.

We do spiritual warfare after the fact after the battle and we're looking at the wreckage of this person's life and we're like, time to do spiritual warfare. Satan is bugging somebody else by this time and we're calling down curses in the name of Jesus upon Satan's head and he's down the road. And, I'm not saying we shouldn't do spiritual warfare. There's a time for spiritual warfare, but so many times we get involved in that when the damage is over and now it's time to do something else.

Notice in verse 9, *“Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die.”* What a statement. Unbeknownst to her, that is exactly what Satan predicted Job would do in this situation. It appears that she perhaps even already had. We don't know. Remember she lost everything too. And now she's looking at her husband who she assumes is going to die very soon. She has nothing, nothing left at all.

Verse 10, *“But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips.”*”

What an amazing statement from a man who has lost so much. What an amazing statement. Shall we only get good things? Our response is, yeah, we should just get good things. We like to quote those verses, every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father of heavenly lights. And I'm just going

to put that one on my refrigerator. And we're just going to hang on to that, we're just going to claim that one.

But how about claiming this one? How about putting this verse on your refrigerator? Shall we accept only good from God and not evil? Ah, I don't think I want to make that a memorization verse, no. Let me tell you something.

This is an attitude that got Job some pretty amazing, I don't know, appreciation from a lot of people over the years, myself included. And it says here that with this he *“did not sin with his lips.”*

Verse 11, now. *“Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that had come upon him, they came each from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They made an appointment together to come to show him sympathy and comfort him. ¹² And when they saw him (look at this) from a distance, they did not recognize him. And they raised their voices and wept, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads toward heaven.”* Obviously, like Job, a sign of great grief and sorrow.

“¹³ And they sat with him on the ground (check this, for) seven days and seven nights, (and I like this too) and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.”

Now listen, at this point you can say nothing bad about what job's friends are doing for him. At this point, when people are suffering a terrible loss of some kind, I am convinced the best thing to do is to say nothing. So many people stay away from bringing, or trying to bring comfort. to someone who has endured a great loss and they'll say, I don't go because I don't know what to say. Don't say anything. The comfort doesn't come from what you say. It comes from you being there.

The Bible says, weep with those who weep so go and cry. (Romans 12:15) Go cry with them. That's going to mean way more than anything that comes out of your mouth. To simply weep with those who weep is a powerful demonstration of the heart of God and I think it's important to remember.

Now we're not going to get into it tonight, but as we do continue on in the following chapters, Job's friends are going to make a deadly mistake. They're going to start talking, and that alone, that in and of itself is their mistake. And we're going to see how that talking was a mistake and in the coming chapters, why they were so wrong in what they said.