

“Job’s Grief” – Job 1-2

I have some questions for you. I promise these are not trick questions but I need you to make sure of your answer before you speak. Some are easy and some not so much. I’ll start with an easy one. Is God good? Of course He is. Now, is God perfectly good? I mean is everything He does good and meant for the good of His people and His Kingdom? Ok, now, is God just? Is He fair? Are you sure?

Is God all-powerful? Is there anything He can’t do? Ok, that is kind of a trick question. We know God can’t lie and stuff like that but do you think God is ever in Heaven wishing He could do something or change something or prevent something from happening and He just can’t? Of course not. God is all-powerful. Is He all-loving? Sure. Is He perfectly loving, meaning is everything that God does because He loves His people and His Kingdom?

Does God always punish evil? Does He always reward good behavior? Are you sure? Does God ever do anything mean? Evil? Wrong? Bad? Does He cause bad things to happen? Are you sure? Does your insurance company insure you against what they call, “Acts of God”? Those are things like earthquakes and lightning and flood. Those aren’t good things. Does God cause those or allow those or is He just not able to stop them?

These are all questions for the ages. Well, maybe not the insurance question even though that may be important if it happens to you. But as we go through the Book of Job for the next few weeks, I hope to help you answer SOME of those questions. I say “some” because some of those questions may never be answered this side of Heaven.

Job asked some of those questions and never got an answer even though God responded to Him personally. I find the Book of Job to be fascinating and difficult. It is fascinating because nowhere else in scripture or anywhere else are some things revealed like they are here. I find it difficult because it doesn’t answer all the questions and even brings up more than need answering.

It’s difficult also because it was written so long ago that the original language is hard to interpret. It uses some words and phrases found nowhere else in all of scripture. It is difficult because it is easy to get distracted trying to figure out the minor details instead of learning the reason it was written.

Who wrote it? Maybe Moses, maybe Moses and Job, maybe Bob from accounting. Who knows? Who cares? Where was it written? When was it written? In what language was it written is even a question and some people get too bogged down in all of that and might miss the reason the book was written. We know it was written very, very early; maybe even before

Genesis and I believe it to be one of the deepest and most profound books in all of literature, not just the Bible.

I'm in good company. The great John Calvin loved Job so much he preached 159 sermons from it. I hope to preach something a bit fewer than that but I make no promises. I have said that you can preach through the Book of Job in five minutes and you might get the gist of it or you might preach all year on it and still miss the point.

You rarely hear preachers preach on it and my favorite version was told once while I was visiting in the local jail and I heard one inmate say to another that he needed to read the Book of Job. The inmate went on to tell, in detail, the story of Job but he was in the habit of using the foulest language you can imagine. It was just habit and he didn't know he was even cussing but he went on to tell the story as colorfully and effectively as I have ever heard and did so in a way that the other inmate could really understand and that man was helped greatly by it.

So, my goal is to use the Book of Job to help us greatly as well. I will try not to cuss, even though that really seemed to work for that one inmate but hopefully we will be encouraged by the book and the story of Job as we see what he did right and what he did wrong when he was attacked by Satan. Have you ever been attacked by Satan? I'm sure you have.

Some people seem to see a satanic attack with every hangnail and flat tire that comes into their lives and some people never seem to see the spiritual warfare that is really happening in the world around them. 2 Timothy 3 says that everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. I want to know how we can help people and help each other in the midst of being persecuted by Satan. What is the correct response and what can we say or do to help people who have been attacked and / or even while we are being attacked? And today I want to look specifically at how to help ourselves and others when grief is the overwhelming emotion.

Who better than Job to teach us about grief? So, turn, if you would please, to the Book of Job. Job is between Esther and Psalms in the Old Testament. It is considered a book of poetry, much like Psalms and Proverbs and some others. We will go into more and different details about how the book starts off later but today I want to specifically look at Job's grief as we read chapters one and two of Job. I don't remember ever using two whole chapters as a text for any sermon but we will today because it is necessary. I think you will understand why.

Let's finally jump right in. Job chapters one and two.

In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. 2 He had seven sons and three daughters, 3 and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East. 4 His sons used to hold feasts in their homes on their birthdays, and they would

invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. 5 When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would make arrangements for them to be purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, "Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." This was Job's regular custom. 6 One day the angels[a] came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan[b] also came with them. 7 The Lord said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the Lord, "From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it." 8 Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil." 9 "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. 10 "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. 11 But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face." 12 The Lord said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger." Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord. 13 One day when Job's sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, 14 a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby, 15 and the Sabeans attacked and made off with them. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!" 16 While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The fire of God fell from the heavens and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!" 17 While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and swept down on your camels and made off with them. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!" 18 While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, "Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, 19 when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!" 20 At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship 21 and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart.[The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised." 22 In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.

2 On another day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them to present himself before him. 2 And the Lord said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the Lord, "From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it." 3 Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason." 4 "Skin for skin!" Satan replied. "A man will give all he has for his own life. 5 But now

stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face.” 6 The Lord said to Satan, “Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life.” 7 So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. 8 Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes. 9 His wife said to him, “Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!” 10 He replied, “You are talking like a foolish[e] woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?” In all this, Job did not sin in what he said. 11 When Job’s three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him. 12 When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him; they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads. 13 Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was.

He owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys and he lost them all, but do you think he even gave them a second thought after he was told he had lost his ten precious children? Losing one child can mess up a parent forever. I hope you cannot imagine that kind of loss and never have to but losing ten in one day to “an act of God” is beyond comprehension.

All of them in the prime of the lives; their futures, their possibilities; the memories yet to be made with kids and grandkids, all gone from Job in the blink of an eye. Don’t you know he would have given every donkey, camel and stupid old goat to save just one of his children? But they were all gone and there was nothing he could do about it.

Doctors have identified five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. They say that almost everybody goes through some form of those stages after a great loss and everybody grieves differently and for different lengths of time but look at Job’s first response. Look at **Job 1:20**. Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship.

I read one commentary that said, *“This is the grandest scene that human nature has ever presented.”* (Biblical Illustrator) And if you have never suffered a great loss, you will admire this and will rightfully want to emulate his response when grief comes to you. But if you have ever suffered and suffered big time; if you have ever had your heart ripped out of your chest by grief, you only have one thought: that’s ridiculously impossible. Right? Job might as well be a cartoon character with a response like that. Either he didn’t love as much as you or he isn’t being truthful.

I love that song we sang a few minutes ago, "It Is Well With My Soul." Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, It is well, it is well with my soul. Can you honestly say that? Can you honestly sing to God that whatever happens to you, in whatever state you find yourself, no matter how difficult, you have peace? You say, "*Preacher, it's just a song. Nobody can do that!*" Some of you may have heard the story behind the words to that song. It was written by Horatio G. Spafford. Spafford was a successful lawyer around Chicago in the 1870's. He had a thriving law business, a wife, four beautiful daughters and a young son.

Tragically, in 1871, their son died and the family was greatly grieved. It was a horrible loss. Then the Chicago fire consumed most of all their possessions. Not long after, Mr. Spafford decided to take his family on vacation to Europe where his friend D.L. Moody was preaching a revival. Due to some last-minute business, Spafford had to send his family on ahead to Europe without him. Midway across the Atlantic the steamship the family was on collided with another ship and was sunk killing all four of Spafford's girls. His wife was the only one saved. Spafford then sailed to England, going over the location of his daughters' deaths and it was on that ship that he penned the words to the song, "It Is Well With My Soul". I can't comprehend going through that kind of tragedy but I can picture him on the side of the boat going across the water watching the waves crashing all around him and feeling the words, "*When sorrows like sea billows roll.*"

What would your song be at that moment? Would it be similar to Spafford's; words that would encourage others from a hymnal for 150 years after you die? Or would they be words of bitterness not suitable for anybody to hear? How do you get peace like Spafford had? Like Job had? How do you get to that point in your life that you can honestly sing to God, "It Is Well With My Soul"?

I want to ask you another question. It is a question that is answered plainly in the book of Job and other scriptures but I have never really heard it preached on or even discussed but I believe if we can answer this question it will literally change everything! It will either change everything for all of us here or it will just change everything for me because if I don't make the case you will probably fire me for heresy.

So, here goes. My question is: was it God's will that Job suffer? I'll even go a step further and ask: Did God cause Job's suffering? Do you understand the implications of my questions? I'm asking if all-loving God causes bad things and if so, how can we still call Him all-loving?

Now, I know what most of you are going to say. It is the same thing I have been taught in Sunday School since I was a little kid. God causes good things and allows bad things, right? Well, is God sovereign? Of course He is and if God is sovereign then that means He is in control of everything. If God is in control of everything, then to say He causes some things and allows others is simply a play in semantics so that...we don't hurt God's feelings.

Well, I don't believe that should be a problem here. I don't believe it because I believe God is ok taking credit and / or blame for whatever is going on. In fact, I think He wants you to know it. Turn in your Bibles to **Isaiah 45:6-7**. I think it's important for you to see this and not just take my word for it. Isaiah 45:6-7 says, *"That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun That there is no one besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other, 7The One forming light and creating darkness, Causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these."*

Does that sound like somebody who is going to get their feelings hurt if they are blamed for something? No! In fact, I believe it is somebody that wants you to know He is the cause and I believe Job understood that. I'll tell you why I say that. Read verses 20 and 21 again in Job 1. At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship 21 and said: *"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and **the Lord has taken away**; may the name of the Lord be praised."*

The very first thing Job did was worship God and he did it while admitting that it was God that caused it. God gave...and God took away. He didn't say Satan took it away. He didn't say it was karma or bad luck or even that God allowed it to be taken away. God took it away and Job was ok with that. In fact, that word used here and translated worship means to worship truly and in great peace. Job had peace! He truly worshiped. He wasn't just going through the motions and he had peace while he was doing it. He knew God caused his pain and even scolds his wife in the next chapter when she tells him to give up. He says in **2:10**, *"Shall we accept good from God and not trouble?"* How do we get to that point in our own lives where we can accept bad things from God in peace? Todd, how do I do that?

Well, let's fast-forward maybe as much as 2000 years after Job and let's see Mary Magdalene at the tomb in **John chapter 20 verses 10-16**. This is the worst day of Mary's life. She has just seen not only her friend but her Savior die a cruel death on a cross. She watched as all her hopes and dreams died. Maybe you can relate to the feelings she is going through right now. But not only all that but now she gets to the tomb of Jesus to anoint His body with spices and now His body is even gone.

How could God be so cruel? Mary didn't do anything to deserve this. She had been obedient. She had been loving and kind. She was just doing what she knew to do. But this is just too much. Let's read it in **John 20:10-16**.

Then the disciples went back to where they were staying. 11 Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb 12 and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. 13 They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." 14 At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there,

but she did not realize that it was Jesus. 15 He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." 16 Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

So...was it God's will that Mary – an innocent woman – have such grief? Did God cause the grief? Well, let's look at it this way. Was it God's will that Jesus die on the cross? Of course it was. Paul says in **2 Corinthians 5:21**, *"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."* God did it. It was His idea before the dawn of time that Jesus would leave Heaven, go to earth and die on the cross to pay for our sins and then rise again on the third day.

So, was it God's will that Job suffer? Yes. Did God cause his suffering? Yes. He used Satan as a tool to do it but ultimately God caused it for Job's sake and for the sake of God's Kingdom. In fact, at the end of the book of Job it says in **Job 42:10-11**, *"10 After Job had prayed for his friends, the LORD made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before. 11 All his brothers and sisters and everyone who had known him before came and ate with him in his house. They comforted and consoled him over **all the trouble the LORD had brought upon him**, and each one gave him a piece of silver and a gold ring."*

Isaiah 55 says, *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. 9"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts"* Do you know what? I'm ok with that. In fact, it brings me great peace. Do you know why I'm ok with that? Do you know why Job was ok with that and why Mary was and Jesus was and Paul and David and so many others were ok with that? It's ok because God is love. **1 John 4:8** says, *"Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love."* **John 3:16** says, *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."* Was it God's will that Jesus die on the cross? Yes.

Was that fair to Jesus? No. Did Jesus deserve that? No. Because it was God's will, did that keep it from hurting Jesus? No. Job never said it didn't hurt or that it was ok because he deserved it. Neither did Mary Magdalene. It was ok because God is love. **Romans 5:8** says, *"but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* So, if God is love and we know He would never do anything just to hurt us or just to be mean, then we know that all things – even the bad things - work together for our good as it says in **Romans 8**.

Let me go back and ask some of the same questions I asked at the very beginning. I need to make some things clear and I need you to have them clear in your mind. Is God good? Yes. Is God love? Yes. Let me ask a slightly different question. Does God cause all bad things to happen? No. Does He cause some things that we consider bad to happen? Yes. But we all

know that some bad things happen because we make bad choices and have consequences for those choices. God does not cause us to sin or even tempt us to sin.

But sometimes bad things happen because we do live in a fallen, sinful world and ever since Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, this world is not the paradise that God made originally. Some people are born into extreme poverty, some people are born crippled, sometimes you step on a sticker or break a nail coming home from the nail salon. Is all of that caused by God because He is trying to teach somebody a lesson? Not necessarily. And now you feel like Job felt because now you have more questions than when you started. Right?

So, fast-forward another 2000 years or so from Mary at the tomb. Here you sit in Christ Fellowship with a hundred different questions and still wondering what you have to do to have the kind of peace that Horatio Spafford wrote about; the kind of peace that says, *“Even when sorrows like sea billows roll, I can trust Him.”* Even when, like Job, I lose everything I have; even when a child dies, the doctor gives bad news, you lose your wife, your job, your church and your friends, even though I can’t understand it, it’s not fair, I don’t deserve it and I wouldn’t wish it on my worst enemy...still I have peace.

Todd, what do I have to do to get that? I’m going to tell you and then I’m going to ask you to do it right here and right now. You first have to repent of your sins. Sin is anything that displeases God and the word repent means to turn away from that. When I was a new driver I drove downtown one night and went down a street the wrong way. When I realized it, I quickly turned around and went the other way. That is repentance. Turn away from your sin and go the way God wants you to. Secondly, you put your faith and trust in the crucified and risen Jesus Christ and that what He did on the cross was enough to pay the price you couldn’t pay for your sins. Thirdly, you must commit your life to being obedient to God including confessing Him publicly and living biblically the best that you know how. Don’t wait another minute. Do it now as the music plays.