

## WHAT MAKES YOU STRUGGLE IN YOUR FAITH?

**Is God good?**

**Can he be trusted?**

*Suffering comes in many forms - Job experienced that from bereavement to loss of his business to breakdown in relationships to the breakdown of his health against a backdrop of friends falsely accusing him.*

### ***The Problem of evil.***

*The biggest philosophical reason that drives people away from church.*

*If God is all-powerful and all-loving, then why does evil still exist?*

*Why are young women murdered walking home at night?*

*Why do the evil prosper and good people suffer?*

The book of Job has something important to say to us all whether life is going well or life is agonisingly hard

Maybe we need to capture again the book of Job

- its account of Job's judgemental and hypocritical friends
- its grappling with suffering and pain
- its realism concerning those dark days when God seems silent or unjust

## **The Back-story**

Job is a strange book isn't it? I spent years avoiding this book! It feels so different to other parts of the bible.

1. It has a fairytale beginning and a fairytale ending with loads of chatter in the middle which is hard for us to get a take on.

2. It seems to have a peculiar answer to suffering - you are suffering Job but God made snowflakes so be quiet!

3. It's huge! A dramatic poem - 90% poetry - in the form of wisdom literature

4. **But it's full of stuff that is wrong** - chapter after chapter outlines Job's friends understanding of the world and they have got it wrong! Even though at times it feels so close to the truth.

**They are committed to a system - if you do wrong God will punish you**

**"Job you are suffering because you have done wrong".**

**And their system is without compassion, or mercy.**

**Over and over these friends tell Job to confess his wrongdoing.**

**Can you imagine that - unjustly accused**

Remember the POST OFFICE WORKERS miscarriage of justice- it is devastating

**Job was not suffering because he was sinful. He was outstanding:**

1:6 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."

Later on we have more of a description of what this looked like:

Job knew he wasn't perfect in his youth but he offered his sacrifices, he lived a godly life - he was confident in his walk with God and he had reason to be:

This is what his life had been once: Job 29

*"How I long for the months gone by,  
for the days when God watched over me,*

**3**  
*when his lamp shone on my head  
and by his light I walked through darkness!*

**4**  
*Oh, for the days when I was in my prime,  
when God's intimate friendship blessed my house,*

**5**  
*when the Almighty was still with me  
and my children were around me,*

**6**  
*when my path was drenched with cream  
and the rock poured out for me streams of olive oil.*

**7**  
*"When I went to the gate of the city  
and took my seat in the public square,*

**8**  
*the young men saw me and stepped aside  
and the old men rose to their feet;*

*....*  
**11**  
*Whoever heard me spoke well of me,  
and those who saw me commended me,*

**12**  
*because I rescued the poor who cried for help,  
and the fatherless who had none to assist them.*

**13**  
*The one who was dying blessed me;  
I made the widow's heart sing.*

**14**  
*I put on righteousness as my clothing;  
justice was my robe and my turban.*

**15**  
*I was eyes to the blind  
and feet to the lame.*

**16**  
*I was a father to the needy;  
I took up the case of the stranger.*

**17**  
*I broke the fangs of the wicked  
and snatched the victims from their teeth.*

**18**  
*"I thought, 'I will die in my own house,  
my days as numerous as the grains of sand.*

**It is no wonder Job struggled.**

**He had no idea why everything had changed.**

**He did not know of the conversations that had taken place in the heavenly realms.**

*“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.*

Satan took everything - he destroyed his business, his oxen were stolen, his servants killed, his camels were stolen and the herdsmen were killed. Then after hearing this the worst thing his children - all of them killed in a hurricane when the house fell on them.

Utter ruin and

Unbearable grief and heartache

Yet Job responded in his pain in an astonishing way!

*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.[c]*

*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.*

Satan was not content

*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.*

**And Job suffered, physically, emotionally, socially outcast, stripped of everything. He holds on to his hope in God.**

**At times his hope is so strong:**

*Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him;*

*I will surely[a] defend my ways to his face. 13:2*

**His faith astonishing**

***19:25** I know that my redeemer[c] lives,  
and that in the end he will stand on the earth.[d]*

**26**

*And after my skin has been destroyed,  
yet[e] in[f] my flesh I will see God;*

**27**

*I myself will see him  
with my own eyes—I, and not another.  
How my heart yearns within me!*

**At others times he longs for the grave:**

**All the time his friends - drip drip their ugly theology.**

**They are so certain they know why Job is going through this!**

Job's pain is extraordinary  
Some of his words are like a yell  
He feels so alone  
separated from others - who offer no wisdom, no comfort no hope  
separated from God, who is silent

His only hope is in the grave but God has restrained Satans hand. Job continues to live in his desolation.

His friends appear with a simple solution - they have a system  
"Job you must be evil that is why you are suffering - repent and all will be well"

Job struggles with this. This system doesn't work.

He sees evil people prosper.  
He knows he hasn't done evil.

His suffering does not make sense. Why.....

Job has a problem- emotional, psychological, intellectual problem.  
His problems are the problems of a believer.

Everything is wrong.

Can he hold on to God or not?

At times he can ...

At times he can't ...

It is as though God is against him.

**This is huge - Have you been here? Is God good? Is God just? Is God my enemy?**

**1. is God good? 10:2-7**

*I say to God: Do not declare me guilty,  
but tell me what charges you have against me.*

**3**

*Does it please you to oppress me,  
to spurn the work of your hands,  
while you smile on the plans of the wicked?*

**2. is God just?**

*As surely as God lives, who has denied me justice,  
the Almighty, who has made my life bitter, 27:2*

**3. is God the enemy? Job feels it is so.**

*know that God has wronged me  
and drawn his net around me.*

**7**

*"Though I cry, 'Violence!' I get no response;*

*though I call for help, there is no justice.*

**8**

*He has blocked my way so I cannot pass;  
he has shrouded my paths in darkness.*

**9**

*He has stripped me of my honor  
and removed the crown from my head.*

**10**

*He tears me down on every side till I am gone;  
he uproots my hope like a tree.*

**11**

*His anger burns against me;  
he counts me among his enemies.*

Job 19:6-11

#### **4. He longs to hear from God**

30:20 *"I cry out to you, God, but you do not answer;*

*And God is silent*

Job makes a good case against his friends system :  
you get what you deserve  
But he has pain and unanswered questions  
He grapples.

He longs for explanation, for vindication .  
He is searching for answers.  
He fears God but is stuck.

*The words of Job are ended. 31*

Could the book end here? In practice we often end here.

Is this where our system ends?

we believe there is no answer as to why there is suffering in the world

and fear that God is not good.

But cling on anyway.

#### **Enter Elihu ch.32**

#### **A different voice**

*So these three men stopped answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. 2 But **Elihu son of Barakel the Buzite, of the family of Ram**, became very angry with Job for justifying himself rather than God. 3 He was also angry with the three friends, because they had found no way to refute Job, and yet had condemned him.[a] 4 Now Elihu had waited before speaking to Job because they were older than he. 5 But when he saw that the three men had nothing more to say, his anger was aroused.*

#### **An unlikely voice**

v6-17 - young, not traditionally who should speak,

*"I am young in years,*

*and you are old;*

*that is why I was fearful,*

*not daring to tell you what I know.*

**7**

*I thought, 'Age should speak;*

*advanced years should teach wisdom.'*

**8 But it is the spirit[b] in a person,**

*the breath of the Almighty, that gives them understanding.*

**9**

*It is not only the old[c] who are wise,  
not only the aged who understand what is right.*

**10**

*“Therefore I say: Listen to me;  
I too will tell you what I know.*

**11**

***I waited** while you spoke,  
**I listened** to your reasoning;  
while you were searching for words,*

**12**

***I gave you my full attention.**  
But not one of you has proved Job wrong;  
none of you has answered his arguments.*

**13**

*Do not say, ‘We have found wisdom;  
let God, not a man, refute him.’*

**14**

*But Job has not marshaled his words against me,  
and I will not answer him with your arguments.*

**15**

*“They are dismayed and have no more to say;  
words have failed them.*

**16**

*Must I wait, now that they are silent,  
now that they stand there with no reply?*

**17**

*I too will have my say;  
I too will tell what I know.*

**he waited, he listened, he concluded - v8-9**

Understanding comes from God ( 1 Timothy 4:12)

## **An urgent voice - a prophetic voice**

v17-20

*For I am full of words,  
and the **spirit within me compels me**;*

**19**

*inside I am like bottled-up wine,  
like new wineskins ready to burst.*

**20**

*I must speak and find relief;  
I must open my lips and reply.*

## **A trustworthy voice**

***I will show no partiality,  
nor will I flatter anyone;***

**22**

*for if I were skilled in flattery,  
my Maker would soon take me away.*

**33**

*“But now, Job, listen to my words;  
pay attention to everything I say.*

**2**

*I am about to open my mouth;  
my words are on the tip of my tongue.*

**3**

***My words come from an upright heart;  
my lips sincerely speak what I know.***

**4**

***The Spirit of God has made me;  
the breath of the Almighty gives me life.**v21-33:4*

## A compassionate voice

**v5-7** Answer me then, if you can;  
stand up and argue your case before me.

**6**

**I am the same as you in God's sight;  
I too am a piece of clay.**

**7**

**No fear of me should alarm you,  
nor should my hand be heavy on you.**

## A correcting voice

**v8-13**

**But** you have said in my hearing—  
I heard the very words—

**9**

*'I am pure, I have done no wrong;  
I am clean and free from sin.*

**10**

*Yet God has found fault with me;  
he considers me his enemy.*

**11**

*He fastens my feet in shackles;  
he keeps close watch on all my paths.'*

**12**

*"But I tell you, in this you are not right,  
for God is greater than any mortal.*

**13**

**Why do you complain to him  
that he responds to no one's words[a]?**

## God speaks

**1. Through dreams and visions**

**2. In suffering**

**v12- 22**

*Why do you complain to him  
that he responds to no one's words[a]?*

**14**

**For God does speak—now one way, now another—  
though no one perceives it.**

**15**

**In a dream, in a vision of the night,**  
*when deep sleep falls on people  
as they slumber in their beds,*

**16**

*he may speak in their ears  
and terrify them with warnings,*

**17**

**to turn them from wrongdoing  
and keep them from pride,**

**18**

**to preserve them from the pit,  
their lives from perishing by the sword.[b]**

**19**

**"Or someone may be chastened on a bed of pain  
with constant distress in their bones,**

**20**

*so that their body finds food repulsive  
and their soul loathes the choicest meal.*

**21**

*Their flesh wastes away to nothing,  
and their bones, once hidden, now stick out.*

**22**

*They draw near to the pit,  
and their life to the messengers of death.[c]*

### **God speaks with a purpose**

**v. 16 -18**

**he may speak in their ears  
and terrify them with warnings,**

**17**

**to turn them from wrongdoing  
and keep them from pride,**

**18**

**to preserve them from the pit,  
their lives from perishing**

*We can ignore even pleasure. But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world."*

— C.S. Lewis, The Problem of Pain

### **God has not left us but given us a mediator!**

Listen to these incredible words! 33:23-25

*Yet if there is an angel at their side,  
a messenger, one out of a thousand,  
sent to tell them how to be upright,*

**24**

*and he is gracious to that person and says to God,  
'Spare them from going down to the pit;  
I have found a ransom for them—*

**25**

*let their flesh be renewed like a child's;  
let them be restored as in the days of their youth'—*

### **Job needed a mediator**

**Job 9:33-35**

**33**

*If only there were someone to mediate between us,  
someone to bring us together,*

**34**

*someone to remove God's rod from me,  
so that his terror would frighten me no more.*

**35**

*Then I would speak up without fear of him,  
but as it now stands with me, I cannot.*

### **He knew that his advocate was on high**

**Job 16:19-21**

**19**

*Even now my witness is in heaven;  
my advocate is on high.*

**20**

*My intercessor is my friend[a]  
as my eyes pour out tears to God;*

**21**

*on behalf of a man he pleads with God  
as one pleads for a friend.*



**He longed for his redeemer**

**He needed to hang on to this truth in his pain**

**His mediator was on his side - we know that!**

**Job was being tempted to move away from his faith  
A temptation to stop believing God is good  
Satan wanted him to fail.**

**Job just needed to continue to wait.**

**His mediator was on his side.**

**33: 26**

*then that person can pray to God and find favor with him,  
they will see God's face and shout for joy;  
he will restore them to full well-being.*

**27**

*And they will go to others and say,  
'I have sinned, I have perverted what is right,  
but I did not get what I deserved.*

**28**

*God has delivered me from going down to the pit,  
and I shall live to enjoy the light of life.'*

God was saving Job

He was being refined

He was not being attacked by an enemy but shaped through the pain the pain of the surgeons scalpel

Job was like a glass of water - he looked clean but he had a little sediment in it - there was some pride - when shaken it is seen.

God teaches through pain Hebrews 12:5-6

*Have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says,  
'My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline,  
and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,*

**6**

*because the Lord disciplines the one he loves,  
and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.'*

*... God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. **11** No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.*

**Even Jesus learned through suffering** Hebrews 5:8  
although he did so without sin

**Jobs suffering not a sign of God's enmity but a sign of love  
not a punishment of wickedness but a refinement of  
righteousness**

**God will use these things to restore us**

**v29-30**

*"God does all these things to a person—  
twice, even three times—*

30

*to turn them back from the pit,  
that the light of life may shine on them.*

**It is not a preparation for destruction but a protection from ultimate destruction**

Job - not suffering because of sin

but still has something to learn - to deepen his dependence and trust of God

Job was not suffering because of sin

Geneva bible puts it like this:

**Job has a good cause but handles it evil.**

**He was in danger of sinning because he suffered**

He grappled with God and God used his pain to sharpen him, to refine him, to strengthen him.

His faith was amazing but there was still more to learn

Job suffered not as punishment but refinement. To keep him persevering.

James 5:10-12

**10** *Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.*

**11** *As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.*

God works in our lives in the same way

*Not only so, but we[c] also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. **Rom 5: 3-4***

*Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

**2 Cor 12:7-10,**

**6** *In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.1 **Peter 1:6-7***

Life may not always go well - suffering can come - unjust suffering -

Job struggles...

Health ...

God can be trusted despite it .

He is there in it even when it feels he is silent. He is not silent!

He has given us a mediator.

### **Romans 8**

**26** *In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.*

**Is God good?**

**Yes.**

**We have the Spirit praying for us in our weakness.**

**We have Christ interceding for us.**

**We may be under attack**

**Job was. But know this: Romans 8**

*Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. 34 Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of*

**Christ?** *Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written:*

*"For your sake we face death all day long;  
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." [i]*

**37** *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, [k] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

*Suffering is a reality in our fallen world but hold on*

*God will speak to you through it - the Spirit is interceding for you  
Jesus is interceding*

*We need to hold on to this ..*

*Keep crying out to him and he will keep you.*

*Life may not always go well - suffering can come - unjust suffering -  
but God will use it*

**10** *And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. 11 To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

**1 Peter 5:10-11**