



TIME OF GRACE®

Seriously, God? This is Why God Let's Me Suffer?

Study Notes

Summary

If God has the power to end all our pain and provide answers for all the hurt we've been through, why doesn't he? Why does he let bad things happen to good people? Pastor Mike takes these often-asked questions, flips them, and challenges us to examine our motives: Why do we love God? Or do we just love his blessings?

- The Book of Job is about _____.
- **Job 1:1** — 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.
- **Job 1:2,3** — ²He 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.
- **Job 1:4,5** — ⁴His sons used to hold feasts in their homes on their birthdays, and they would invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. ⁵When 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.
- **Job 1:6-8** — One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them. ⁷The Lord said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the Lord, "From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it." ⁸Then 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."

- **Job 1:9-11** — 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. ¹¹But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face.”
- **Job 1:12** — ¹²The 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.
- Pain _____ it.
- **Job 13:15** — ¹⁵Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him; I will surely^[a] defend my ways to his face.

Points to Ponder

1. We all are tempted, like Job, to forsake God and forego worship, when we face extreme hardship. How might we guard ourselves against forsaking God and worship?
2. One way to continue to grow closer to God while suffering like Job is by having friends who share our faith, understand God, and can provide comfort. How many Christian friends can you give thanks for who are there for you in times of grief?
3. Friends may be well intentioned, but they don't always give the best counsel regarding God. This is why studying God's Word personally and daily is important. Do you have a regular plan?
4. Think on fellow Christians who no longer come to worship because of life's struggles. Can you give some time and make a connection with them again?
5. How about people who are suffering in the world, who need to know the love of God? Might you be a good friend to them and provide the hope of Christ?

Homework for Next Week

Read Job 1:13-22

Time of Grace Ministry
Seriously, God? This is Why God Lets Me Suffer?
Job 1:1-12, Job 13:15
May 5, 2024

Pastor Mike Novotny

If you questioned my Christian faith, that wouldn't be crazy. I'm not saying that because I'm hiding some dark, sinful secret or leading some double life. I pray here in church, and I pray when I'm at home. I put on worship music and praise here in church; I do the same at home. I love opening the Bible and reading the word of God here, in church; I love doing the same thing at home. But if you questioned that, and asked, "Pastor Mike, but why?" That would not be crazy. For the past 40 years, my dad has had this thing that he's said to me, like, a thousand times. He said to me, "Son, you don't know how good you got it." It's a total dad-thing to say to your kid, isn't it? "In my day, we -- You kids these days, you don't know how good you got it."

And as much as I want to say, "Okay, dad." I stopped the other day to think about the 40 years of my life, and it kind of dawned on me, he's right. I've had ups and I've had downs, I've been through hard things and easy things, but comparatively, to other people on this planet, to many of you, I've had it pretty good. I can't relate to 71% of the songs on the radio because I've never had a broken heart. I met Kim when I was in college, my first ever girlfriend. I've never been broken up with, I've never been dumped, I've never been separated, I've never been divorced. I've had it pretty good. Besides collapsing a lung in college, I've been incredibly healthy, both physically and mentally. I've never had to battle anxiety or depression. I've never had autoimmune issues. I've had it pretty good. I grew up in a very safe environment. I've never experienced personally the wounds of trauma, not from war, not from child abuse. I've had it pretty good.

Yesterday, do you know what I did? I woke up at 6:00 a.m., I ran six miles with my wife, we talked about our love, our family, our blessings. I went to see my daughter in a volleyball tournament. She played, didn't lose a single game, we hoisted the first-place trophy, we picked up some pizza from Aldi on the way home, we feasted as a family, we read our Bible, and then, together, the four of us snuggled up under a fuzzy blanket and watched a documentary about Justin Bieber. So, I've got it pretty good. That might not be your definition of good but that is my definition of a great, great day.

And so, if you would look at me praising God, praying to God, grabbing my Bible, it would not be crazy of you to ask the logical question, "But why do you do that? Like, is God your heavenly vending machine you stick in the quarters of prayer and praise because he spits out this relatively good life? Why do you believe the things that you believe? Have you ever wondered that question? Like why? Why, why?"

I know not all of you here are Christian, Bible-reading people, but a lot of you are, maybe most of you are, so why do you do that? And some of you have been through ups and some of you have been through downs, some of you are a lot like me, but it is a legit question for church-going people to ask "Why?" The Bible says that God is love, that God loves us intensely, and the most important commandment for people like us is to love God back with all of our heart, all of our soul, all of our mind, and all of our strength. And because that's the case with God, our motives matter.

Jesus talked about this all the time. There were people who went to church, and they read their Bibles, and they prayed, and they gave to the poor, but Jesus would ask questions that would get to the heart. Why are they doing that? Is it out of a humble, grateful, sincere love for God or not?

Now, this question is one of about fifteen reasons why I cannot wait to study with you the Book of Job. I'm not sure if you read it before. The Book of Job is this mysterious, odd, interesting, captivating, long, long, and also, long book that's tucked in your Old Testament. And it's about a lot of things that we talk about today. It's about why bad things happen to good people. It's about why sometimes you didn't do anything wrong, and everything goes wrong. It's about how we live in community in the midst of tragedy, what we say and what we shouldn't. It's about God's reason for letting things happen to us that we completely don't understand, and it's a book that we need to read today.

As we jump into the deep end of Job chapter one today, I want to tell you what I think the Book of Job is about. Forty-two chapters, we're going to spend six weeks in this book. At its very essence, what is the Book of Job about? I want you to write this down. The Book of Job is about the love of God. The Book of Job is about the love of God. I might give you a quiz on that next week. "What is the Book of Job about?" You're going to say to me, "The love of God." Like, why do people love God?

Why would you love God? When you're on the mountain top like me right now or you're in the darkest valley of the shadow of death, will you love God and why will you love God? And at the same time, the Book of Job is about the love of God. Does God really love us? If he lets this happen, if he knows about everything, if he has the power to control, if it would be easy for God to end all of your pain and provide answers for everything you've been through, is God actually love?

We're going to explore those questions of our love for God and his love for us in the Book of Job because the Book of Job is about? It's about the love of God. Yeah, alright, five of you got that right. I'll give you another chance next week. So, let's dive into his book. If you want to follow along in the screen, if you have a Bible in your hand, you can open it to Job chapter one, and we begin with verse one. "In the land of Uz there was a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil." Now, Bible scholars aren't exactly sure where Uz was, and they're not positive when Job lived. Most people think around 2000 B.C. But we do know this, Job was a good guy.

The very first thing we hear after finding our location on the planet, "This man was blameless and upright, he feared God, and he shunned evil." Four amazing things about this one man. This is the Bible's way of saying Job was legit. He wasn't just the guy who put on a show at church. If you could see him behind the curtain, he was blameless and upright. No duplicity, his heart was filled with integrity. It says, "He feared God." Which was a way of saying he was in awe of God. When he wrote the name "God" he probably capitalized it. God was the one he believed in, and he shunned evil. When temptation knocked on his door, Job locked it. It wasn't that Job was sinless, but it was true that Job sinned... less. He was a good guy, and as we're about to find out, he had a really good life.

Check out verse two: "Job had seven sons and three daughters, and he owned 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 donkeys, and had a large number of servants. Job was the greatest man among all the people of the East." Job was the GOAT, right? The greatest of ancient times. That's a lot of camels, by the way. Three thou -- He had a mega church full of just camels. If a yoke of oxen is two oxen -- He had 11,500 animals, a large number of employees and servants, people thought of Job and they said, "Whew, That's the guy." And he had ten kids. He was an amazingly blessed man relationally, financially, socially, culturally. He was, the Bible says, "The greatest man among all the peoples of the East."

And just in case you're thinking, "Wait, I know people like that." You know, Super successful CEOs, business owners. But at home, it's a wreck, right? Marriages falling apart, kids hate them, dad's never home. Not Job. Verse four: "Job's sons used to hold feasts in their homes on their birthdays, and they would invite their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. 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." Wow, it's like a functional family. The Bible doesn't have many of those, but did you catch this? "His sons used to hold feasts in their homes on their birthdays." They had like this round robin dinner thing going. All ten of the siblings get together they love each other, and Job, he is such a good father. Did you notice what he does? He hasn't seen his kids sinning, not like, "My kids get wasted every time they have a birthday party." He hasn't heard the kids sinning. Like, "Ooh, they gossiped when they all got together." No. Job says, "Perhaps, my children have sinned just in their hearts."

He was so concerned about their relationship with God -- The details are fascinating. It says, "Job would make arrangements," So, he'd plan on this. "to get up early in the morning," the first thing on his list. "He would sacrifice a burnt offering." In the Bible a burnt offering was the whole animal; you just give it to God. It was the most expensive offering. "For each of them," Not just one animal for all the kids, but ten animals for all ten kids. And it says at the end of verse five that, "This was Job's regular custom. It's like the modern dad who loves his kids so much, he doesn't just kiss them on the forehead before bed, He kneels down next to the bed and prays that they would love God with all their heart, all their soul, all their mind, all their strength.

What do we learn in the first five verses of the book? Job is a very good guy who has a very good life, but then the plot takes a twist. In perhaps the oddest scene in the Bible, we read this, beginning in verse six. "One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them. The Lord said to Satan, 'Where have you come from?' Satan answered the Lord, 'From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth in it.' The Lord said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? There's no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.'" I mean, that's amazing to think about. God is in heaven surrounded by angels and he is boasting about his beloved children. He's not just running the universe and keeping stars from crashing into each other; he's actually talking with angelic beings about his servants on earth.

And he says, "Satan, you see this guy, he loves me, and I love him." The Book of Job is about the love of God, and Job does love God because God loved him first. But Satan, Satan isn't actually a name, it's a title. In Hebrew it's literally "The Sa-tan", the Satan. And "Satan" in Hebrew means enemy or adversary. And so, Satan is going to say "Amen" to this gush fest between God and his dear servant Job, he's going to sow seeds of doubt and that's what he does next. Verse 9: "'Does Job fear God for nothing?' Satan replied. 'Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You've blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face.'"

One Bible paraphrase says that Satan says to God, "God, you pamper him like your pet, so he sits, and he stays because he knows he's about to get a treat, right? You put up the hedge; there's poverty out here, but rich Job in here. There're dysfunctional families out there, but not Job's in here. Of course he praises you, who wouldn't praise you if they get that much back? But I'll tell you what, God, let's make a deal, God. Strike him and we'll see what's in his heart. Decrease his blessing and he will increase his cursing. And he will not perhaps say it in his heart like Job is worried about his kids; he will say it, God, right to your face. Increase his pain and Job will decrease his praise."

And God... shockingly... says, "Deal." Verse 12, "The Lord said to Satan, 'Very well, then, everything that Job 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." And we're going to see exactly how Job reacts to God. For now, though, I want you to write down the big idea. It's the idea that, actually, God and Satan both agree upon, and here's the idea. That pain proves it. Pain proves it. If you're in my boat, you can pray, and you can praise, you can give, you can gather, you can put down roots, and that's all good, but it's not proven. It's only when God allows the pain and someone reacts with praise, that faith is proven.

The New Testament book of 1 Peter, written by Jesus' close friend, Peter, actually talks a lot about this. It's about suffering, sometimes when it's not your fault. And in 1 Peter 1:7, Peter says when you go through the fire, and the trials, and the grief, and

you still hold onto Jesus, he says, quote, "It proves the genuineness of your faith." You have to know that you're not using God when God takes and you still praise. That's why today I want to speak directly to those of you who are not in my boat. I think of those of you who just tragically have been abused in your life verbally, or emotionally, or sexually; I think about how that's affected you. I think about the young couple from our church who for almost their entire marriage, these young people have been dealing with cancer, and they've been dealing with chemo, and they've been dealing with sickness, and they've been dealing with surgery. I think those of you who did not choose it, but depression, just hangs over your head like a cloud all the time. And while I lament that, and while I do pray, and while I love it when you reach out for help, there's something I will say about your pain. It proves it. It proves it.

If you are here today, if you sang the same songs as I did today, if you lifted up the name of Jesus and said, "Christ be magnified," and this has not been a good season of life for you, you proved it. I'll put it this way. Imagine this bandage represents the brokenness of your life. Imagine if this is the pain, and the sorrow, this is the addiction, and the heartache. When I came into church today and I folded my hands to pray, that was good, but if you folded hands to pray, you proved it.

You know, Satan would love to slander God all day long, he would love to say that this relationship with us and God is just pure economics; we're using him for something good. He'd love to say that our faith is fake, and that God isn't worthy of praise, but every time in the midst of our pain, we open this book, we prove it. Some of you, when you walked into church today, you shut the devil's mouth. He's been trying to say, "God, these people are just using you. Look at this guy in the front row. My goodness, he has such a good life." But then you came in, and you shut his mouth, and you proved him wrong.

When you limp into church, you prove that God is worthy of your love. When you sing at the end of your hardest days, you prove that God is worthy. You are proving that Satan is the father of lies and our God is a father who is worthy of all praise. And so, I hate your pain, and I love it, because the one thing we want more than anything in this place is to say, "God, you are worthy of everything." Some of us can't prove it right now but many of you can. I don't know when it's coming for me, but it's coming. There's going to be a day. It might be tomorrow; it might be 30 years from now when my dad will not be right that I don't have it so good. How do you and I prepare for that next moment of pain?

I want to leave you today with a quick clue. Let me show you up on the screen everything that I just read to you from Job 1: 1-12. In these incredible verses from the Bible, we find something powerful. Let me read this to you. "God, God, Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, God, God, Lord, Lord." You catch that before? Let me highlight the words so you see them even better. God, God, Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, God, God, Lord, Lord. Ten times in this half chapter of the Bible we hear about God, and if you knew Hebrew, you would say, "Wow." The Hebrew name for God, "Elohim" implies power, might, strength. The Hebrew word for Lord, some Bible put it in all capital letters, is

what you see in my tattoo, it's "Yahweh. Jehovah." It means "I am." It means "the God of love", "the God who keeps his promises", "the God who is always there for us."

At the very start of the most painful book of the Bible, we see Elohim-the God of power, and Yahweh-the God of love, and you put those two together and you find the God of praise. See, Satan would love to tell you the next time that pain happens, that "No. Oh, God's so powerful, right? He's running the show, but does he love you? He's God, he could stop it. He could cure cancer like that. He can fix kids. He can fix everything. He's so powerful, why doesn't he do it for you? He doesn't love you. You shouldn't love him back."

And when that comes, do you know what you're going say to Satan? Pain proves it. My God is not just the God of almighty power who sits enthroned in heaven, my God is the God of the cross, and he proved it. Two thousand years ago, Jesus came to this world, and he didn't stay in a supernatural force field that kept brokenness outside and blessing inside. Instead, he went through pain for us. The nails proved it. The crown proved it. The cross proved it. And every time we wonder in the midst of our suffering and pain, "Does God... Does God love me?" We fix our eyes on Jesus on the cross and we say, "He must, because pain proves it. He can't be using me, my money, my time, my prayers, my praise. He can't be. Who would go through something like that unless it was love.

And friends, because of that love, as one of my friends recently wrote, there's a conversation going on in heaven right now about you, and it is incredibly kind. If Satan showed up for an all-angels staff meeting today, I wonder if God said, "Have you seen my servant? She has cancer, she came to church. He went through the divorce and he prayed to me today. She's a victim of abuse, but she believes that I am good. He fell into the fire; she has battled addiction; they know what it's like to suffer and look where they are. Have you seen my servants? They love me and I gave them a good reason to."

Friends, pain proves it. Our pain proves we love God. God's pain proves that he loved us first. Let's pray.

Dear God, you are worthy of all glory, and honor, and praise. We are here today, maybe at the highest high or maybe, at the lowest low of our life, but all of us are saying you are worthy of glory, and honor, and praise. God, we don't always get you. We feel like if we had controls of all the buttons and levers, we would -- we would do things so much differently than you do, but we're not you. We know nothing, and you know everything.

So, today, in humility, we take a knee before the cross and say, 'Your will be done.' And we will magnify, and glorify, and hallow, and lift up your name because we believe you're worthy of it. You're the God who has all the power in the world, and yet you subdued that power when your Son died on the cross. Jesus, you are the one who walked on the waves, you raise people from the dead, but on the cross, you did nothing, and you did it to prove your love to us.

Thank you, God, for your forgiveness and grace for our sins. Thank you that the blood of Jesus covers up all of our doubts, and questions, and the moments when we turned on you. Thank you that if we call upon the glorious name of Jesus today, we can be sure that we will end up in a place where there is hedge, and where no brokenness, no pain, no tears, no illness ever gets in.

Thank you for the hope of heaven and thank you for being with us while we are here on earth. We pray all these things, God, in your powerful name." And everyone who believes that God is love joined their voices and they said, "Amen."