

# Job 1,2

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[0:00] Job 1 and 2. It all happened so suddenly.! How suddenly disaster can overtake.

! I don't know if you picked it up in the reading.! It's such an ideal picture as the first five verses in the book of Job. You have this man, there's a description of his character.

He's a man who is blameless and upright. He is wholehearted and straight. He fears God.

He turns away from evil. There's a summary of his wealth, isn't there? Verse 3. 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels. 500 a yoke of oxen.

500 female donkeys. He's wealthy. He's wealthier than all the sons of the east. You've got a picture of his family. Verse 4.

[1:01] There's no strained relationships there. The sons and daughters, they delight to feast with each other. They enjoy one another's company.

And you have a sample of his godliness. Because when they're in the middle of their feasts, Job sacrifices on their behalf. He intercedes for them.

And Job is concerned not that they will bring shame on his reputation. But do you see what his concern is there? That my children may have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.

He cares about their heart religion. He cares about their heart religion. Of his children. He's a father. He's a parent that prays for his children on their back and score.

It's an ideal life, isn't it? An ideal life. And then the messengers come. And it is a stylised account from verse 13 following.

[1:58] It's deliberately stylised. It's intended to show you how suddenly and how totally Job's disaster comes. The livestock and the wealth are gone.

Your servants are stricken down. And the lives of your ten children are taken in a storm. And then if that's not enough, in chapter 2 in verse 7, his own physical health is taken from him.

And then Job gives him counsel. His wife gives him counsel. And she's suggesting, isn't she, something like that. She's saying, Job, God has so soundly and God has so clearly renounced you.

You may as well renounce him. And it is this man whom God describes as wholehearted. He is holy.

A W-H-O-L-L-Y. The ESV says he is blameless and upright. It's tough to be holy.

[3:03] W-H-O-L-L-Y. When God smashes your life. And we want to look tonight at this man. This holy man. In this trial. And it's holy again in the sense of wholeness.

So first of all, let's see the approval of the holy man. Look at chapter 1 and verse 1. And then verse 8.

There's none like him on the earth. He's blameless and upright. Look at chapter 2 and verse 3.

There's none like him on the earth. A blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil. The approval of the holy man.

And it's not just that the writer of the story says he's wholehearted and upright and blameless. But the Lord is describing Job in that way. In chapter 1 and verse 8.

[4:01] Chapter 2 and verse 3. It is the Lord who says of Job that there's no one else on earth like him. A man blameless and upright. Wholehearted. Fearing God and turning away from evil.

And it's a word that means whole or complete. Wholehearted is devotion to God. Upright. That is straight in his life. Fears God turning away from evil.

The approval of a holy man. And God says this is my man. And he's delighted with his servant Job. And he seems to be saying something like this.

As others have said. God seems to be saying that as he looks upon his servant Job. That he's pleased with his servant. It doesn't mean that Job doesn't have more progress to make. It doesn't mean that Job doesn't have more growth to make.

It doesn't mean that he doesn't need to mature in godliness. Or make more progress. But chapter 1 verse 8. It essentially says. Where my servant Job is right now.

[ 5 : 03 ] And what he is right now. I am delighted in him. I am pleased in him. Not that he can't go further. But that I am delighted in my servant Job. Whole hearted and upright.

And blameless. And yet it's this servant. Isn't it? Who suffers like this. And that tells us something which you already know. But often needs to be underscored again and again.

That God can be delighted with you. And yet you may suffer intensely. That God can be delighted with you. And yet you may suffer intensely.

And you say to me. Huh. I already know that. But the problem is. When you and I are plunged into the pit of distress. Sometimes doesn't it? Our wires get crossed. With what we know doesn't always come through.

And we do not always function logically. And sometimes we function psychologically. And it all gets mixed up. And sometimes even though we know. That a person can be perfectly pleasing to God.

[ 6 : 09 ] In this sense. It is possible that in the midst of suffering. And in the midst of difficulty. We can say. Or at least think. Heaven is disgusted with me. And it may be that we search ourselves.

And we search our conscience. And it doesn't accuse us of any grave sin. Any particular sin that has brought this upon us. And it may be.

It should be isn't it. That we indeed. We lay ourselves open before the Lord. And we ask him. To please reveal to us. Any sin. That is unknown to us. And we seek to confess it.

And yet even though we're not accused. And our conscience doesn't accuse us of any sin. That may have brought on the suffering. Nevertheless. We still keep thinking. Even though we know.

That God can be delighted with you. And yet you can still suffer intensely. We resist thinking. No, no, no. God must be disgusted with me. God must be mad with me.

[ 7 : 10 ] Because he would not have allowed this to happen in my life. And it's difficult isn't it. Sometimes for our faith. To keep peace. With what we in our better moments know.

And so you and I need to remember. The approval of a holy man. God can be delighted with you. And the fact that you may suffer intensely.

Is not in itself necessarily. Any sign that God is displeased with you. And that may be. The one thing you need to hear tonight. Secondly.

I want you to see the ignorance. Of the holy man. The ignorance of the holy man. And you see that through. Verses. 6 to 12.

Chapter 1. And then chapter 2. Verses 1 to 7. Let me explain. What I mean by the ignorance of the holy man. Put yourself into Job's sandals. Alright. Get all of the shoes you have on.

[ 8 : 09 ] And get into Job's sandals. How does the story develop for you. Now that you are Job. It develops this way isn't it. You've just finished. In chapter 1 and verse 5.

You've just finished praying. And interceding. And sacrificing. On behalf of your family. Your sons and your daughters. And then what's the next thing you know. Well the Sabeans.

They invade. And they wipe out your oxen. And your female donkeys. And they kill your servants who are keeping them. And that's the next event for you. And then you have that whole series of events.

Of being wiped out of your wealth. And even your family. And then you worship. And you go to worship.

And you say the Lord has given. And the Lord has taken away. What's the next thing that happens to you? The next thing is.

[ 9 : 07 ] You have these loathsome. Disastrous. Putrid boils on your body. They break out. And your physical health is taken away from you. And that is what it is for Job.

Because. Do you see. Job doesn't have the knowledge that you and I have here. That is the ignorance of the holy man. It's not an ignorance that Job can be blamed for in any way.

It's just the stuff he doesn't know. In chapter 1 verses 6 to 12. Job does not know. In chapter 2 verses 1 to 7.

Job did not know. The stuff that was hidden from him. You see. We when we come to the book. We've got the whole script. Don't we? We've got the kind of director's cut.

We've got the behind the scenes stuff. We've got the extras. And it looks different for you. But in Job's shoes. He doesn't know any of that. He doesn't know what takes place.

[10:08] That's it. Between the Lord and the accuser. He doesn't hear. And the accuser. The devil ridicule. Job's. Faithfulness to the Lord.

As if it's something that the Lord has bought. He doesn't hear that. And he doesn't know that the Lord steadfast. Defends Job's honour. And the Lord is steadfastly for him.

He doesn't know any of that. He's ignorant of all of that. And that's no fault of his own. But he just doesn't know. And that gives rise to another point.

Doesn't it? That we can make. That frequently. Frequently. We do not have nearly enough information. To make a correct estimate of our sufferings.

Frequently. We do not have nearly enough information. To make a correct estimate of our sufferings. Do we realise the extent.

[11:11] Of our own ignorance. It's not a blameworthy one. But there's stuff we just don't know. Lots of it perhaps.

I'm told that a website. Van Til. Conilus Van Til. It's a great lecture. I find it utterly impossible to read. But in every lecture. Conilus Van Til.

Would go into the classroom. And at the start of every lecture. He would draw a massive circle. And then he would draw a tiny little circle. And on the massive circle.

He would write. God. And on the little circle. He would write. You. And what he was saying by that. Is we only know a part of God.

Don't we? We only know a little bit of God. God. Because we are small. We're so ignorant. Don't you find that? I find myself saying more and more and more.

[12:09] When. If I'm just saying. Questions come to mind. I don't know the answer. Who do you think I am? God. I don't know. God. I don't know. I don't know. Story of a man who comes. From Spain in 1940.

He's under the guise of being a youth worker. He's supposed to be interested in. Looking at the British stout movement. And the British people. Forces welcome him. But the British officials know who he really is.

And they know that he's really a Nazi spy. And this fellow was going to be sending back. Everything that he saw. And right back into Berlin. And so they put on a good show for him. And they showed him all the Boy Scouts.

Sorts of things. And he saw certain military installations. But Britain was horribly unprepared at that time. For war. And they had to stage a show.

Really. For him. So he would be impressed. He had to fly up in a plane to Scotland. In order for a Boy Scout ceremony. And as they were going up. Britain had very few hurricanes.

[13:12] And spitfires. In their air force. But as they flew up to Scotland. That plane meant wave upon wave. Of British spitfires and hurricanes. Flying around them at different angles.

And different altitudes. It was overwhelming. In fact. When this man sent his report back to Berlin. He said that Britain was an armed camp. What he didn't know.

In that particular instance. Was that it was the same squadron. Of British spitfires. That were going in and out of the clouds. Coming back again. In a new wave. In a little different way.

From a different angle. And so it was just the same group of planes. But it looked like it was for real. It looked like it was a mighty air force. But he didn't know that.

He saw something. But it was what he didn't know. That really mattered. It's often true isn't it for the Christian. In your suffering.

[14:05] In your trials. We have no way of knowing. What is going on behind the scenes. You can think about Ephesians 6 verse 12 sometime.

We don't know how much we're being watched. We don't know what's happening off stage. That we just have no part in it. We don't know how crucial it may be. We don't know how crucial it may be for us to continue day by day.

To walk in faithfulness. Maybe far more crucial than we suppose. We don't have nearly enough information. Frequently. To really form a correct estimate.

Of our sufferings. And what good is that? How can that help us? Well it should keep us from being exasperated. And it should keep you from being overly discouraged in the middle of them.

Thirdly we see the accusation of the holy man. The accusation of the holy man. You can look at it in chapters 1. And verses 9 and 10. And chapters 2.

[15:09] And verses 4 and 5 as well. And so if you want to know. The truth about the book of Job. You've got to listen to the devil. You've got to listen to the devil.

Because the devil gives you the key to the book. He's posed the central issue. And you see it in verse 9. The central issue of the book of Job. Is not why do the righteous suffer.

I can read lots of commentaries. And that's what they want to tell you. That's part of it. But it's not the big issue. Now. It's not why do the righteous suffer.

Notice I didn't say innocent. There's one sentence. There's no one innocent. But the righteous. According to Psalm 32. We are God's forgiven people.

But lots of time. We think the central issue in the book of Job. Is why do the righteous suffer. People often say. When someone's going through the mill.

[16:09] Why don't you read the book of Job. I'm not convinced. That's very very helpful. When you're going through the mill. We'll see that in a couple of weeks. The book of Job does touch on that. But it's not the big issue.

It's not the core of the book of Job. The central issue is. What does the accuser raise. So let's see what it says. He says to God. Here it is verse 9. Does Job fear God for no reason.

Does Job fear God for nothing. And so what is he saying. He's suggesting. Is he. God you've hedged him around. You've.

You've protected him. Add up what you've given to him. You've given him finances. You've given him prosperity. You've given him security. You've given him family. And when you've got those perfect conditions. Well what's the result.

Well of course it's faithfulness to God. And the reason Job loves you. And the reason Job serves you. And fears you. And the way he is God. Is because you've bought him off. You've paid him well.

[17:08] Of course he serves you. You've paid him well. And he's suggesting. That the only reason. Job would serve the Lord. And the only reason.

Why any man or woman. Would serve the Lord. Is because they get something out of it. It's political and economic. So the donor.

Who donates. To a political campaign. And he gives to a political party. Gives massively. To a political party. Why is he doing that? He gives to that political party.

Because if they get into power. He hopes that they will listen to him. On his issues. And address his issues. MPs. Who've been supported financially.

Or been given support. By the political heavyweights. Will be leaned on. Won't they. In parliament. By those people. That the favour is repaid. And that they will support the votes. That they're doing.

[18:07] Or paid for unwanted. Will a man. Or will a woman. Serve God for nothing. Will a man. Or a woman. Love God. Out of sheer.

Disinterested love. If you strip everything away. From this guy Joe. Will he serve God. Out of sheer. Disinterested. Love. If you strip everything away.

From this man Joe. The devil says. He'll curse you to your face. No one would serve you. God. Unless you give them. The goodies. That's a great question.

Isn't it. In other words. The accuser is putting. Forward this issue. Of discipleship. Will. This man. Or woman. Serve God. For nothing. Even if he sees.

No reward. Particularly in it. There's no payoff value. No profit. Will he just serve God. Because he loved God. Because he was his God. Would a man or woman do that.

[19:07] And the accuser says. I vote no. I vote no. Donald Glosch. Tells the story. Of the early.

New England. Presbyterians. And they. The candidates. And credentials. A committee. Like we do. Which examines. Men going forward. For ordination. And for the ministry.

And in their ordination exam. They used to ask them. This question. And the question was this. Are you willing. To be damned.

For the glory of God. It's a very shocking question. Are you willing. To be damned.

For the glory of God. And you say to me. You hear that question. Like I hear that question. It's a false question. It doesn't have to be damned. For the glory of God. It could be saved. For the glory of God. You might still say. Well it's a false question.

[20:05] And my hunch is. That the men in New England. They knew it was a false question. But what they were trying. To get at. With the men. Who were going forward. To the ministry. Was this. Does the glory of God.

And does the praise of God. And does the honour of God. Mean more to you. Than just a cliché. Does it really matter to you. And if it could conceivably. Be so. That God's honour. Would be advanced. If it would be. For God's praise. For you to be damned. Would you. Willing to be damned. Does it mean that much to you. It's a very searching question. Now let us acknowledge. Please let us acknowledge. That is in one sense. A false question. But it does. I think. At least help us. To get to some of the issues. In Job 1 and 2. We have to face. The accuser's question. We have to ask ourselves. And in one sense. It is an unanswerable question. In some sense. But we need to ask.

[ 21 : 05 ] Would I serve God. For nothing. Just for his own sake. Would I love God. Even if I seem. To get nothing out of it. Would I adore God. If he seems. To cast me down. Would I cling to him. Even if he seems. To turn away. And do I merely. Serve God. And love God. For who he is. Or do I love his gifts. More than himself. Would I rather use God. Than love God. And you might say to me. Paul these are false questions. Are they? Or are they searching questions. Lastly. The text shows us. The response.

[ 22 : 03 ] Of the holy man. So the wholehearted man. How does he respond. Let's focus on chapter 1. And verses. 20 to 21. Job responds.

Doesn't he. And he says these. Really famous words. He says. 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. So he responds. In the midst of his suffering. And trial. And you might say. Something like this. When you read those words. Job. I wish I could come. Get to you. I wish I could help you out. But Job. If you really knew. You say. There. Don't you. That the Lord has given. And the Lord has taken away. No no no. That's not how it is. I know. The kind of behind the scenes story. We've heard that. It was the accuser. That got this going. And the Lord merely permitted it. You see.

[ 23 : 10 ] Job. God didn't really take away. He just permitted it. God. And I think Job. Would turn to you and I. With a really puzzled face.

Look on his face. And say. What difference does that make? It may help you. To say. God didn't directly do it. But he permitted it. To take place. But you see. Job knows. And you know. If you think about it. That if God. Is really sovereign. That if God. Is really God. And is in control. Then you've still got. A massive problem. And it really is. The one who believes. In the God of the Bible. Who's got a problem. With the suffering. Of God's people. It is the one. Who truly believes. In a sovereign God. Who foreordains. As the confession says. Whatever comes to pass. And yet a God. Who is. Truly and totally.

[ 24 : 09 ] Committed to the good. Of his people. It's the one. Who truly believes. In a sovereign God. And is committed. To his people's good. Who's got the problem. With suffering. Of God's people. There are some people. That don't have a problem. With suffering. I don't mean. That they're. I don't mean. That they're not sorry. Or that it doesn't. Cause them pain. But they don't have a problem. With it. So if you're a polytheist. You believe. In many many gods. Hinduism. Suffering is. Is no problem. Really. To you. Sure. One God. May give you something good. But another God. Will kind of try and mess it up. And you just expect that. That's no problem. You don't like it. But it just happens. And the fatalist. Has got no problem. The atheist. Has got no real problem. With. Suffering. The idea is. What will be. Will be. Keserah sarah.

[ 25 : 10 ] It's the way. The cookie crumbles. But on the basis of. That. Suffering is not a problem. It's just. The way it is. The same is true. Of the dualist. You know. That there are two. Opposing. Dueling forces. In the universe. There's. There's. The good force. And the bad force. There's. The good and the devil. And they battle. Back and forth. And so on. And that's not Christianity. That's dualism. And if you believe. That kind of thing. That there's these. Kind of forces. Kind of battling. With each other. About 50% of the time. There will be suffering. Won't there. And it's no fun. But it's not. It's not

a problem.

The materialist. The person who thinks. Everything's happening. Just by blind chance. Chance has got no moral. Nature. It just happens. And so.

[26:10] Well. I shouldn't expect. My suffering. Or my trial. To make any sense. You're asking. Completely the wrong question. If you're asking that. If I really believe. Things operate. On blind chance.

Well. It's just the way it is. I think I'm right. I might not be. But let me throw it out.

There's a sense. In which you. I think. I think. I might only be able to say. That it's only the believer. In the sovereign. God. Who works. For the good of.

His people. It is only the believer. In the sovereign God. Who works. For the good of his people. Who's got a right. To cry.

And weep. In suffering. On trial. It is. He or she. Will have a problem. With suffering. There seems to be. Something wrong.

[27:09] Doesn't it. If God is in control. And he is good. And I trust in him. I can't make sense of this.

Do you see. What a. Big God. Job. Job has.

He doesn't try. To cut God down. He says. The Lord has given. And the Lord has taken away. And if we are responding. As whole hearted people.

As Job does. For his suffering. And trial. How does the holy man. Respond. He responds. In that whole hearted way.

That a man or woman. Can weep. That's what he did. In verse 20. Verse 20. He rose. He tore his robe. He shaved his head. He fell to the earth.

[28:04] They are the signs. Of mourning. You tear your outer robe. You shave your head. They are real signs. Of grief. And mourning. And distress. And Job engages in them.

He grieves. Job isn't a stick. He isn't a stone. He is a man. Made in the image of God. And he weeps. And he grieves.

In this distress. He is a whole person. And whole people. Know how to weep. And grieve. And mourn. Over their losses. And not only does he weep.

He worships. Verse 21. The Lord gave. And the Lord is taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. And when he said that.

He punched a hole in the. In the devil's pillow. How can he say that. In the face of what he's been through. Surely by grace.

[29:07] I've got a number of commentaries. On Job. One of the best. By a liberal commentator. And he said this. He said. Note the order. It's really really helpful.

Just note the order. In verse 21. The Lord gave. Job. Thoroughly believed. In God's grace.

Job believed. That everything that he was. And everything that he had. Was God's gift. And if that really is true tonight. That everything that I have.

Is really God's gift. Of his grace. And the Lord has given them. Then I actually have no claim on it. And if he should take it away.

It's only something that he has already given. Do we sit down with the baptism. Because it's so difficult to ask those questions. In the baptism of a child.

[30:07] That if a child should die before you. You promise. To God. Not to complain before him. How can you do that. Well because of the question. A few before isn't it. Because this child.

Is a gift from God. And ultimately belongs to God. And I have no claim on what God has given. And so tonight.

If I really believe in the grace of God. Then that response. At some point. Ought to be mine. The Lord has given. The Lord has taken away.

May the name of the Lord be praised. I've told you this story. Lots of times before. Alan Cameron. The Covenant. In 15th century Scotland. He's in the dungeon.

In Edinburgh. He'd been unjustly fined. And Alan Cameron. Had not paid his fine. For religious reasons. What Alan Cameron. Did not know.

[31:07] Was that his son Richard. Had been killed. In a battle. For some cruel reason. One of the troopers. Had taken the head. And hands. Of Richard. His son. And they'd cut them off.

As tokens. And they came by. Alan Cameron's dungeon cell. They opened the door. And they threw. The head and the hands. Of Richard Cameron in.

And they hollered down. To his father. Do you know who these are? And Alan Cameron. Took that head. And those hands. On his knees. Tendly. And he felt them. And he said yes. They are my son. My dear son. And then he said this. Good is the Lord. Who could never wrong me. Nor mine. But has made goodness. And mercy. To follow me. All the days of my life. It's something like saying. The Lord has given. And the Lord has taken away. [ 32 : 05 ] May the name of the Lord. Be blessed. What am I saying? And I think. That we should have. These great one lines. In our suffering. That somehow. We should come out. These great lines. And kind of. Batter them off. As a very harsh note. God. Is not calling you. To be a hero. Or a heroine. Particularly. But he is calling us. To be whole men. And women. Who in our sufferings. Are free to weep. And grieve. And mourn. And be faithful. To worship God. Whose name must be blessed. Amen. Thank you.