

The End of Suffering

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning everyone. My name is Alistair. I have the privilege of being the assistant pastor here at Brunsfield and today it is my joy to conclude our series on the book of Job. Now I'll admit for those of you who are in the building this morning, it is weird looking at me on camera and not being in person.

But the restrictions of ease, which mean that Sabino and I have been able to go to Austria and visit family. So please do bear with me as we dive into Job 42 over video.

But before we do that, let's pray together. Father, we thank you for this book of Job and we thank you for this chapter that we're going to look at this morning.

Would the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be pleasing to you, our rock and our redeemer. Amen. For some of us, the final chapter of Job will bring a sigh of relief.

Relief that you didn't slog through chapter after chapter of suffering and chaos for the story just to end in more suffering. Relief because as we look at the life and livelihood of Job being restored, it satisfies our internal desire for a happy ending.

[1 : 1 7] And it satisfies our romanticized view of the way life should go. The whole movie industry is built upon that natural desire for a happy ending, isn't it?

We like the stories where the screen fades out at the end and all you read is, and they all lived happily ever after. We like the happy endings because deep down, it's what we want for ourselves.

Maybe this ending of the book of Job gives you hope. Because you're desperate for that similar kind of happy ending in your own life. As we journeyed with Job and sat on the ash heap with him in the middle of great suffering, maybe you felt at home.

Maybe you felt like you shared a similar experience with Job because you look at your life and it just hurts. Or maybe this ending of Job makes you angry because you see no hope.

Because there doesn't seem to be an end to the suffering in your life. This morning I want us to walk through these final 17 verses of Job and see three things from the text.

[2 : 3 5] That Job is humbled, justified and exalted. But then I want us to take a step back and look at the whole pattern of Job's life and see in a greater sense how that same pattern is in the life of Jesus and to see that same pattern in the life of Christians today.

The book of Job begins with a believer who is blessed. And because of his great faith, suffering comes his way. But in the end, suffering is replaced with tremendous blessing and restoration as Job is exalted to an even greater place than he was before.

Regardless of how you feel this morning, regardless of how chaotic and painful your life may be, regardless of how much agony you're in in this moment in time, that same pattern is true in the life of every Christian.

If you're a Christian here this morning, we are told in no uncertain terms that we will suffer because of our faith in Jesus. But we are promised that suffering is not the end.

For the Christian, that happy ending we long for is our future and nothing can take that away from us. So we're going to look at Job chapter 42 under three headings and then briefly take a step back and bring the whole series to a close.

[4 : 06] So the first thing that we see in this passage is that Job is humbled. In verses 1 to 6, Job is humbled. So Job has just listened to God's two marvellous speeches that pull the curtain back for Job to get a glimpse of the greatness of God.

This marvellous God who's in control of creation, in control of death and the devil. And so in verse 1, Job confesses that God can do all things.

In verse 3, he acknowledges his ignorance in what he has said. And in verse 6, after being blown away by the grand view of God, he repents.

Job has said things that were wrong. In the midst of great suffering, Job has cried out and said that God was unjust, that God hates him, that God was fighting against him.

In the midst of his agony, there were times when Job lost sight of who God is. And so Job was humbled, brought to the point where he recognised how mighty God is and how small Job is in comparison to him.

[5 : 24] And in the midst of our suffering, sometimes the most helpful thing that can happen to us is that we are reminded of how small we are, but how great God is.

But we can't only have an intellectual understanding of that. We can't put God in a neat little box of doctrine that we're comfortable with.

Sometimes we need a powerful reminder of how great our God is. And that reminder often comes in the form of suffering. Being brought to the place of humility might just be the medicine we need to swallow the hard pill of suffering that will come our way.

We need to be reminded so often that God is God and that we are not. And that even in the hardest and darkest of times and situations, God is in control and he is good.

Tim Keller helpfully said, as we thought about way at the beginning of this series together, you don't realise that Jesus is all you need until Jesus is all you have.

[6 : 39] So verses one to six, Job is humbled. And the second thing that we see in this passage is that Job is justified. In verses seven to nine, Job is justified.

So God turns to Job's three friends using Eliphaz as the representative. And look what God says in verse seven. I am angry with you and your two friends because you have not spoken the truth about me as my servant Job has.

Or as the ESV, which is more accurate, puts it this way. God says, my anger burns against you. These are the emotions of a holy God.

Towards those who misrepresent him. God isn't just a little bit annoyed here. He is furious that Job's friends thought they needed to defend God.

It is a burning anger. But it's not like ours. In our anger, we flip the lid. We lose all sense of control. But this is the righteous anger of a holy God against Job's miserable comforters.

[7 : 47] In verse eight, God says that these friends did not speak what was right about him. Throughout Job's suffering, instead of comforting their friend as they should have, they attacked him.

They said that his suffering was due to his own sin or sin in his life. They misrepresented God as an insensitive enforcer of justice.

A bit like a merciless and graceless dictator in the sky who calls the shots and destroys everyone who crosses his path. But also in verse eight, God defends Job and says that he spoke what was right.

How? Because even in his doubts, even in his questions, even in his pain, Job is a genuine believer who always sought to be right with God.

And three times in verse eight alone, God says, my servant, Job. God is using a term of dignity, a term of affection.

[8 : 53] It is a sign of the covenant relationship between God and Job. This relationship is restored. Job is justified. Now imagine how Job feels hearing that.

After months or maybe even years, sitting on an ash heap in agony, feeling the crushing weight just of the thought that God has abandoned him.

To now be called God's servant. To be said, to be told that he is justified. It is a powerful reminder that through it all, he was not alone.

But the Lord, the faithful one, the covenant keeping God was by his side that whole time. And in verse eight, the tables turn on Job's friends.

God tells them to offer burnt offerings for their sins and to go to Job who will pray for them. And only then God will not deal with them according to their foolishness.

[9 : 54] So walk in their shoes. They need to go to this guy that they have been slating, absolutely slating for chapters and have him pray for them because he was right all along.

Can you imagine how embarrassed they must feel? Job takes on the role of an Old Testament priest and he prays for these so-called friends. But think about how he must feel too.

As he stands and prays for three people who chapter after chapter have dragged him through the mud. Insisting that he was a sinner and that he was a fool.

I think that anyone else in that situation would say, no God, they don't deserve it. I don't want to pray for these miserable comforters, for these worthless physicians.

Because it's hard to pray for those who hurt us, isn't it? When this happens to us, we protest. We don't want people to be forgiven for the pain that they have caused us.

[11 : 00] And it is easier to stay angry and to give up. But Job is a godly man. And instead of refusing, he chooses the path of faithfulness.

He denies himself and he obeys God. He chooses holiness over hostility. And Job can do that because he has seen God.

He knows that he himself doesn't deserve the loving kindness and grace that God is showing him. He knows that he is just as sinful as his three friends are. And so he does the right and holy thing.

He prays for the forgiveness of those who opposed him. So Job is justified. And the fact that Job is humbled and justified are the necessary things that lead to the next point in the text and the climax of the book.

The final thing that we see in this text is that Job is exalted. In verses 10 to 17, Job is exalted. Notice three things in the text that the Lord did to exalt Job.

[12 : 09] In verse 10, the Lord restored. In verse 10, the Lord gave. And in verse 12, the Lord blessed. Now, it's important to remember that Job is not a follower of God because of the stuff that God can give him.

We've seen that throughout the book, haven't we? In all of Job's laments, in all of his cries, the thing that took center stage, the thing that grieved him the most was the thought that he was not right with God.

He has been humbled and justified. And I think Job would be content if his story would have ended there. Even if he did receive nothing, he would still have loved and trusted God because Job wanted God, not the blessings.

But the blessings came as a result of that restored relationship with God. God being full of compassion and mercy, exalted Job and gave him twice as much as he had before.

His brothers and sisters come over for a celebratory meal. The only meal in the book since the one in chapter one where all of Job's children were killed.

[13 : 22] And in verse 11, we see why they come. They come and comfort and console Job because of everything he's been through. Now, I do wonder where his brothers and sisters have been through the rest of the book, but they're here now and they're celebrating with Job.

And they each give him some money and a gold ring. And so Job's wealth is restored. In verse 12, the Lord blessed Job and his possessions are restored.

He gets twice the amount of livestock and animals that he had to begin with. And even Job's family is restored as he has seven sons and three beautiful daughters.

So this man who was previously the greatest of the people of the East is now twice as much or has now twice as much than he did before. He is exalted to a greater sense than he was in the beginning of the book.

So this man who we have journeyed with, who we've sat in the ashes with, who we have mourned with, who we have cried with, is exalted in an even greater sense.

[14 : 29] In his pain, Job cried out for death because he felt alone and abandoned. But look at how his life actually ends in verse 16. What do you think the grandkids heard about when they went to see Grandpa Job?

I doubt he told them stories of camel races and big parties or festivals. But I'm sure that every time someone came across his path, he told them to trust in the unfailing love of a good and faithful God who cares for, who sustains and who walks with his people even through the greatest suffering.

You can almost hear it on his lips, can't you? Suffer well for the glory of God. But the end of verse 17 brings us back to the reality of life.

Job dies. Sure, he was an old man and he had lived a long and joyful life after his great suffering, but he still died. And death comes to us all.

But Job was hoping for something more than death. Remember in chapter 19? How his hope was beyond the grave. How he said, I know that my Redeemer lives and I know that I will stand face to face with God one day.

[16 : 03] It almost leaves the book of Job open-ended, doesn't it? It leaves us wondering, what is next? Where is that final? Where is that true hope that we've been longing for?

And so as we draw the series to an end and reflect on Job's entire life, I want us to take a step back and think about the pattern of his suffering and then exaltation.

And how that same pattern is reflected in the life of Jesus and how it will ultimately be reflected in our lives too. And friends, it is in this moment that we see we are even more blessed than Job ever would be.

We see this pattern of suffering and exaltation first and foremost in the suffering and exaltation of God's Son. The suffering and exaltation of God's Son.

So Job is unique in a way. He is held out by God as an example of godliness. His suffering is extreme. It is intense.

[17 : 13] And all of that is supposed to make us think of Jesus, the perfect servant of God, who is absolutely holy and upright because he is God. The one who went through the most intense and agonizing pain that any human has ever been through and will ever go through.

Jesus is God come down. God in the flesh who came to be part of our world and he suffered. Jesus was rejected by those in his hometown.

Unpopular among those he was sent to save. Unpopular and hated by the religious leaders. Mocked by many. Betrayed by a friend. And he stood before a crowd of his own people who shouted, crucify him.

And in addition to all of his physical torment on the cross, the more agonizing part of it was bearing the full weight of the wrath of God against the sins of the world.

Jesus knows what it means to suffer. That is the most important thing to remember in all of our suffering.

[18 : 24] And all of our questions about suffering in the world that we do not come to a God who is indifferent about suffering. But we worship a God who has suffered himself. My friend Andy Robertson summarized it wonderfully with just this little sentence.

We worship a God with wounds. And that mind-blowing truth should transform the way we think about suffering.

So Job's life is a foreshadow of the life of Jesus. It follows that same pattern. Job was blessed and then he suffered. And then he's blessed in abundance and exalted.

Philippians 2 shows us that same pattern in the life of Jesus. The perfect son of God. Listen to a few verses. Have this mind among yourself which is yours in Christ Jesus.

Who though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped. But emptied himself by taking on the form of a servant being born in the likeness of men.

[19 : 29] And being found in human form he humbled himself by being obedient to the point of death. Even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name.

So that the name of Jesus every knee should bow. In heaven and on earth and under the earth. And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Jesus is God but he humbled himself by becoming a human being. By suffering and dying on a cross. And then the Lord raises him from the dead and exalted him to the highest place.

Jesus is now seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven. Where he is ruling and reigning over all of creation. Do you see that pattern? Jesus suffered and then was exalted to the greatest place.

And we need to understand that before we think about how this pattern is played out in our lives today. And that's the final thing I want us to think about together for a moment.

[20 : 43] The suffering and exaltation of God's people. The suffering and exaltation of God's people. So what happened to Job happened in a greater sense to Jesus.

And it is what will happen to us as Christians. When we hear the message of the good news of Jesus. When we are presented with a grand view of the God who saves.

We are humbled. We see his might and his holiness. And the only right conclusion is to turn to Jesus and repent. To confess our unworthiness.

To confess our sin and to trust in him. And then through the completed work of Jesus on the cross we are justified. We are given the status of being right before our holy God.

He took our sin and gifted us his righteousness. But right now in this life the Bible is clear. We are still in a broken world.

[21 : 46] We will suffer like everyone else does. Death. Disease. Illness. Pain. Mental health struggles. Depression. But for the Christian there is an added element.

Because we will suffer for our faith in Jesus. We will be opposed because of our faith. We will be oppressed. We will be ridiculed and we will be sidelined.

For some of our brothers and sisters around the world today. Being a Christian is a death sentence. But our hope is not in this life. We may not be blessed materially like Job is.

The Bible never promises material wealth. Health and prosperity. But the Bible promises a deep seated certain hope of an eternal future.

In the glory of God. For all those who put their trust in Jesus and live for him. In the end we will be exalted. Following Jesus will mean that we are infinitely blessed.

[22 : 54] Not in this life. Though there are wonderful blessings in this life through Jesus. But our ultimate blessing. And our final exaltation is in the end. The New Testament says that we will be joint heirs with Jesus.

That is a greater exaltation. One that Job couldn't even begin to comprehend. Death is not the end. The eternal glory of God as we are exalted to be with him.

That is the end of the story for everyone who follows Jesus Christ. That's why James says in the passage that was read earlier on in the service.

That we should wait patiently for the Lord's return. We wait because God is compassionate. God is full of mercy. And he calls us to suffer well for the glory of God.

But God also tells us that all of this life is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory that far outweighs all of the suffering that we face now.

[24 : 01] Friends, remember what this whole book of Job has been about. This book is here to teach us to suffer well for the glory of God. That is the message that we need to persevere.

By the power of the Holy Spirit until that final day when our suffering is no more. When our happy ending, our eternal life of perfect harmony with God becomes a reality.

A day is coming when our compassionate and merciful God will wipe away every tear from our eyes. As we come into his presence for an eternity and dwell with him in perfect union.

That is the perspective that fuels us to suffer well for the glory of God. That is the true happy ending that everyone longs for. And it is the story of all those who trust in Jesus.

Friends, we don't have all the answers to pain and suffering. But we do have a God who also suffered and was exalted. And who tells us that even when we suffer, it is not the end.

[25 : 10] But we too will be exalted and we will be with him. That is the end that we're waiting for. The return of the Lord, the Lord with wounds.

Who one day will call us out of our suffering. And into a perfect relationship with him. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the book of Job.

We thank you for the wonderful lessons that it has taught us over these last few weeks. But Father, we ask that you would continue to teach us by the power of your Holy Spirit.

To suffer well for your glory. And to live faithful and obedient lives. Until that final day. When Jesus comes, the Lord with wounds.

And calls us into your perfect presence for eternity. We ask all of this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[26 : 09] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.