

The Problem with Pain

JOB: View from the Ashes series 2

by Bill Aumack

So last week we met Job. He's wealthy. He has 10 adult children. He's described as a mighty man among the East and a humble follower of God. Sounds like an all around great guy. And he has the worst day of his life, right? He loses all his wealth. He loses his children. And then a short time later, he loses his health. and he's covered from head to toe in painful sores. And then Job's friends show up. And these are good friends. These are people who love Job, who care about Job, who want the best for Job. And they sit with him on the ground in the ashes and the dust for seven days and don't say anything. I don't know about you, but I can't sit on the ground for like 10 minutes and I'm looking for a chair. Alright. And these are good friends. Now, ultimately, we'll see that they end up giving some advice that Job doesn't agree with and doesn't follow. And we should always run the advice we get from people through our set of morals and filters and goals that we have to see if we agree with it or not. And Job does that. But these are good friends.

And so today, we're going to continue with Job chapter 3. Open your Bibles with me to Job chapter 3. And while we're doing that, don't raise your hands or anything, but have you ever felt like Job where just everything is going wrong? Just can't catch a break. I remember some years back, and this is minor compared to what Job was going through, but I think in a week's time, The lawnmower, the dryer, and the refrigerator all died. Like one week, you're like, that's it. We're just not gonna clean up anymore around here. Right? And you can think, what's going on? And that's minor compared to what Job was going through. Okay? And so sometimes we have that, and we just feel like there's so much is happening. And sometimes, We have this thing, and it's painful, and it hurts, and it's causing us grief. I'm not trying to belittle anybody's pain. It's real. But it's just this thing. And if we look at our life, we have this whole big mound of blessings and God's grace and faithfulness. That thing is driving me nuts. Can't even see this stuff [the blessings] anymore. And we're so focused on this thing that we forget all about this stuff. Ever been there? Most of us have. Most of us probably have. Okay? And in the midst of our sufferings, it's

natural to question God. That's okay. but there's something that we must do and we'll get to that.

All right, so Job 3 is just kind of one continuous thing, but I'm gonna break it up into three parts today. So our first part. There we go. Is Job's lament. And this is the first 10 verses. Let's read that together, okay? It says, after this, Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. He said, may the day of my birth perish, and the night that said a boy is conceived. That day may it turn to darkness. May God above not care about it. May no light shine on it. May gloom and utter darkness claim it once more. May a cloud settle over it. May blackness overwhelm it. That night may thick darkness seize it. May it not be included among the days of the year, nor entered into any of the months. May that night be barren. May no shout of joy be heard in it. May those who curse days curse that day. Those who are ready to rouse the Leviathan. May its morning stars become dark, may it wait for daylight in vain, and not see the first rays of dawn, for it did not shut the doors of the womb on me to hide trouble from my eyes."

Now apparently, during the seven days of silence, Job has been preparing a speech. And he's pretty upset. And he curses the day he was born, and not just the day he was born, but the night he was conceived. Right? The day he was born wasn't enough. And he's pretty upset about all this stuff, right? And we know that Job's people celebrated birthdays. Job chapter one told us about his kids getting together to celebrate their birthdays together. So they thought birthdays were a happy day. We know this. But Job is cursing that day. He says it'd be better if that day didn't exist. That his whole life doesn't have purpose. But Job was wrong about that. He had done many good things that we'll see in Job 29. And he was a servant of God, and God was proud of Job. Job's life had achieved many good things. Now, Job still praised God, and he still trusted God, but he's still in pain, right? And he thinks his wife His life, sorry, his life is wasted. I'll pay for that one later. He thinks his life has been wasted. Mark 10:28 to 30 says, then Peter spoke up and said, we have left everything to follow you. And truly I tell you, Jesus replied, no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age. homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and fields, along with persecutions, and

in the age to come, eternal life. If you've trusted God and you followed God, your life is never wasted, amen? You may not be the most famous. You may not have accomplished the most according to earthly standards, whatever that is. You may not have the trophies. You may not have the billion dollar bank account. If you have a billion dollar bank account, I wanna be your friend. But when you've trusted God, when you've done your best according to God and what He says, your life is not wasted. Okay?

So what do we learn from this first part here? When we face suffering, it's okay to pour out our hearts to God and express our deepest emotions, right? You think God hasn't heard this before? You think in the entire history of the world, all the billions of people that have lived, you're the first one that's had a rough day? God's heard this before. He's a big boy, He can handle it. He can take it. It's okay to pour out your frustration. God, I am frustrated, I don't understand. I don't know what's going on. It's okay. Why is this happening to me, God? It's okay to ask those kinds of questions. Okay?

Continuing on, the next section is Job's desperation, verses 11 through 19. It says, why did I not perish at birth and die as I came from the womb? Why were there knees to receive me and breasts that I might be nursed? For now I would be lying down in peace. I would be asleep and at rest with the kings and the rulers of the earth who built for themselves palaces now laying in ruins with princes who had gold, who had filled their houses with silver. Or why was I not hidden away in the ground like a stillborn child, like an infant who never saw the light of day? There the wicked ceases from turmoil and there the weary are at rest. Captives also enjoy their ease and they no longer hear the slave drivers shout. The small and the great are there and the slaves are freed from their owners. Job thinks death is gonna be a good thing because he can rest. I can sleep. I don't have to worry about it anymore.

Now, we don't know what people at Job's timeframe knew about God and life and life after death and death. We don't know. Job is written very early. Some people say before the flood. Some people say right after the flood. It happens very early in our history. And we don't exactly know how much they knew about life after death and eternal life. But Job sees death as a chance to rest, and I don't have to fuss with it anymore, right? Just lay down and be done, and

be better that way. But Job was wrong about that. See, in this world, some people are important, and some people aren't. And some people are rich, and some people aren't. And some people are famous. And some people aren't. Does that affect how you get into heaven? Nope. God judges everybody the same, and He's fair about it. Revelation 20:12 says, and I saw the dead great and small standing before the throne, and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life, and the dead were adjudged according to what they had done. as recorded in the books. What are we judged on? According to what we have done. Doesn't say according to your bank account. Doesn't say according to your number of followers on Instagram. Doesn't say anything like that. according to what you've done. Okay? And Job had done some good things. He was just focused on the problem that he had, and he had forgotten all of the other stuff. And he had a... That was like an all-time worst day, okay? Not taking anything away from that. It was a bad day. but he forgot about everything else. In times of desperation, we can turn to God for comfort and hope, knowing that He sees our pain. It's okay to ask God questions and say, what's going on? It's also okay to say, God, man, I need a little help here. I need a little help. I need some comfort. I need you to help me understand. Help me endure this. Help me to continue on.

And then our last section is Job's cry for death, the last six verses here, 20 through 26. And it says, why is light given to those in misery and the life to the bitter of the soul? To those who long for death that does not come, who search for it more than hidden treasure, who are filled with gladness and rejoice when they reach the grave. Why is life given to a man whose way is hidden from God has hedged the end? For sighing has become my daily food. My groans pour out like water. What I feared has come upon me and what I dreaded has happened to me. I have no peace, no quietness. I have no rest, but only turmoil.

Job had cared for other people, we'll see again later in Job 29. And he had helped care for people. We know that he helped by offering burnt offerings for his children. He was thoughtfully thought of other people. But now Job really understood how they suffered. Right? Job was like a billionaire of his time. living in the nicest house with the most servants, with all the luxuries that life

had. He didn't really know what suffering was. He tried to help others, but now he knows what suffering is. And it's interesting that Job says, Why is life given to a man whose way is hidden from whom God has hedged in? I don't know if you remember, in last week, Satan accuses God of building a hedge around Job to protect him. And Job sees that hedge, but he sees it as the way God has hemmed me in and I've got all these troubles and there's no way to escape. Very interesting. But look at that one hedge in two different ways. And the devil thought that God was protecting Job. Okay? Job thought that God was not protecting him. What do we learn? Even in our darkest moments, we can find solace in God's presence and trust in His plan for our lives.

See, and that brings us to the problem with pain. See, we assume pain is bad, and we do everything we can do to avoid pain, right? If you get a headache, what do you do? Take some aspirin. You don't want that to turn into a migraine. If you twist your ankle, what do you do? Take some aspirin. Advil, whatever. We have them all in our house, right? There's Tylenol, there's aspirin, there's Advil. Make your choice. And man, you can buy... they come in like jugs. Like this is like a lifetime supply here. And we think pain is bad. And when we get injured, pain is bad. And sometimes we have illnesses that cause pain. And we see that that's bad, we wanna stop that. And emotional pain can be worse than physical pain. It's harder to deal with. And we see addicts that are trying to recover, dealing with the pain that they've caused, not only in their lives, but in the lives of their friends and their families. And they have to deal with that pain, not to mention the pain of just overcoming the addiction. I've watched Linda's MS take her from being able to walk. to needing a cane, to needing a walker, to needing a wheelchair. And there's pain in that. There's pain. And some of us have gone through similar things, right? But did you know that pain can be good? Nobody knows that. Not a single head shook yes. Pain is good. See, if that was a hot stove, and I didn't have pain, my hand is now melting. Pain is good. Pain is what keeps you from chopping your fingers off when you're chopping those carrots that Susanna was talking about earlier. Pain has a point in our lives and it can be good, okay?

But there's a problem with our pain. And we don't understand each other's pain. I might look at somebody that's going through something, it's like, what's the big deal? That's not painful. But when I'm in pain, somebody else might

look at it and go, well, it's the big deal, right? We don't always relate well to somebody else's pain. And what's hard for one person isn't necessarily hard for another. And we don't deal well with it. I don't know what an addict goes through as they're trying to do recovery and the pain that they go through. Some of you here do, but I don't. I know it's hard. I know it's painful, but I don't know what it's like. I'm as close to Linda's pain of the MS as you can be. But I would say she understands it better than I do. Right? She has a different view of that than I have of it. and we don't always understand it. And sometimes God can use us when we've gone through this pain to help somebody else. Right? Now, you don't have to have gone through the exact same pain as somebody to help them. Right? I can support my friend who's an addict and going through recovery, even though I've never done that. I can support my friend who has MS. even though I've never had MS. I can support my friend who has cancer, even though I don't have cancer. Okay? But sometimes when you've gone through those things, you understand better. And you can say things and be there for people in a way that others can't. And God can use us and the pains that we go through to help somebody who's struggling.

This goes back to what we talked about two weeks ago. The problem with grace is us, because we're selfish. And the problem with pain is it makes us self-centered. Because when I'm in pain, the only thing I can think about is... I hurt, I'm struggling, you should go away and leave me alone. Right? But they said something insensitive to me, don't they know? I remember somebody once who was going through something very difficult, terminal disease, and they said once, people tell me that they understand what I'm going through. I said, they don't understand what I'm going through. I said, you're right, they don't. they're trying to help. They're trying to be kind. Okay? And so we gotta be careful about that and what we say to people when they're going through pain. Because pain makes us self-centered, and all we can see is that thing that's causing us pain, and we forget all about the mound of blessings and the friends and God's grace and all the stuff that has made us who we are. And all we can see is this thing causes me pain. And we don't want to be in that spot. It's natural. It will probably happen if you experience enough pain. And when you figure out that you're doing that, then that's your time to step back and go, wait a minute. That's time for course correction. That's not where I want to be.

The other thing I want to bring up real quick is last week we saw the devil in heaven talking to God, and he made some accusations. I mean, the Bible even said he calls him the accuser. He makes some accusations. Who is on trial here? Is it Job or is it God? I dare say it's God. It's God that's on trial here. And Job in some small way is almost like a prototype for Jesus of what's to come. He has to go through the trials and prove that it is possible. Because Satan says it's not. And God says it is. And so that's very important for us to remember as we go through this. We are going to have pain in our lives. Everybody has it. Jesus had pain in his life. If he's going to have pain in his life, what makes you think you're going to avoid it? Okay? And so we have this pain and it's going to happen to us. We just have to learn to get through it as best we can, ask for God's help and look for ways to grow from that. Amen.

See, because while it's natural to question God in times of suffering, we must ultimately trust in His sovereignty, right? God is the one that's in control. See, when I start saying, God, why are you doing this to me? Why is this happening to me? How come all this is happening to me? I want me to be in control because I wouldn't do that. Right? And God says, you're not in control. I'm in control. And what's a little bit of suffering in this world? Can you imagine how minuscule our 80ish years here on this planet are going to look when we get to heaven and have an eternity? What fraction is 80 over infinity? That'll mess your math teacher up. Don't put that in your calculator. It'll not work. Right? Such a small fraction of time. Such a small fraction of time.

Reflection. What trials have you been through? And what did you learn from those trials? It doesn't do you any good to go through a trial and not learn something from it. Maybe you learned not to make certain decisions or not to have certain friends or not to do certain things. I don't know. Sometimes... You end up in these, you know, Job didn't do anything to have his trials, but sometimes maybe you just learn how to endure, how to be like Paul and say, I can endure all things through Christ who strengthens me.

The challenge this week is to use your experiences to help someone else. Remember to include the part about how God helped you through and point them to Jesus.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you so much for this story, because it helps us understand some of the spiritual battles that go on at least a tiny bit. Lord, it helps us to realize that you are in control. And while things may happen to us that we don't like, things may happen to us that cause us pain, things may happen to us that makes us wonder why, ultimately you're in control, Lord. And help us to submit to your sovereignty and not to think it's all about me. Lord, we're grateful for the things that you do for us. Help us to keep our eyes on the good and the positive things, Lord. To try and move through the times of trial and tribulation as best we can, as quickly as we can. Lord, we're grateful for all that you do for us. Keep us safe. Bring us back again next time. In Jesus' name, amen.