

# The Problem of Simplistic Answers

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Date: 04 June 2023

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[ 0 : 00 ] Our Father, thank you for these words. Thank you that you are living and speaking. You speak truth to us. You help us in our struggles. You give us hope. You give us what we need.

Please speak to us now through these words written long ago that, again, the gospel of Jesus would be fresh to us today. In Jesus' name. Amen. Great. Well, there are lots of different religions in the world. We know that, right?

And, of course, they all have their differences, right? Does God look like a blue elephant? Or is he invisible and infinite? And those kind of things. But most religions in the world, they have a few things very much in common, right?

And one big thing that they all have in common is the principle of retribution. That, you know, if you sin, you get punished. You do something wrong and then the gods will punish you with suffering. I mean, in a way, that's how the whole world works, right? If you have children and they don't eat their vegetables, well, they can't have dessert, right? You punish them. The youth and they, I don't know, they yell at their parents so they get grounded.

[ 1 : 08 ] When you're an adult, you park illegally, you get a fine. Basically, that's how the world works, right? But that's how religions work as well, right? Karma. You sin and then the result is, yeah, things will happen in your life.

The kind of traditional stuff from cartoons, right? You do something wrong and a lightning bolt zaps you from heaven because the gods are angry with what you've done. Basically, you know, if you live a good life, things will be good for you.

And if you don't live like that, things will be bad for you. Paul calls it the elementary principles of the world. And it's so common.

And it helps people to be good, right? It's a very simple system. You know, you do good and you're blessed. And if you don't do good, you'll suffer. It's very simple. It's straightforward. We can all understand it.

And, yeah, and it motivates people to be good, right? Isn't that a great thing? Well, the book of Job really confronts us then, right? The book of Job that we've been going through is this big book in the Bible that raises so many questions.

[ 2 : 14 ] Is this right? Is this what God is like? Because here is a really good man, a blameless and upright man, and yet he goes through very intense suffering.

Why? And one reason, one way that really confronts us is as we're now going to debate this principle. Because Job, he's just been visited, as you know, if you were here last week, by three of his friends from different parts of the Middle East.

They come. They want to comfort him. They want to encourage him. And so they speak together.

And, you know, what we're going to look at is like 24 chapters. It's more than half of the book.

It's just this debate, this endless. I mean, if you've ever read Job, you know what it's like, right? This endless debate between Job and his friends. And so it's big.

It's important. Although I do think if we'd spent a long time on it, it would be a bit repetitive. Did you know that the longest preaching series on Job was 18 years, a couple of hundred years ago, verse by verse?

[ 3 : 17 ] I don't know if I wanted to be part of that church. But so anyway, we're going to do this in one week. But as we go into reading this in a bridge version, how should we read it?

Because there were two errors we can go into, right, as we read this. One, of course, is to take everything that we're going to read as absolute truth. A bit like Paul's letters, right?

Whatever Paul says is absolutely true. And I know someone who studied Job like that. And just every verse, well, this is absolutely true. The only thing is if you've read Job, then you come to the

last chapter.

And then God says something interesting, right? God says to Eliphaz, the Temanite, one of the friends, well, my anger burns against you and your two friends. Because you have not spoken of me what is right.

Unlike my servant Job. So God, at the end, he thinks he disagrees with the friends. At the same time, it's very easy to just dismiss these chapters, right?

[ 4 : 16 ] Why should we listen? We know these guys are wrong. But we don't know that, right? Until you get to the end of the book. The thing is, this is wisdom literature. This is stuff that should make us think.

It should make us reflect, right? We read this and we should think, well, what do I think? Is this really true? Hang on. Is this really right? That's how we should read it. Because to be honest, everyone in this debate believes that.

Job and his friends, they all believe, yeah, if I do good, things will be well for me. And if I suffer, well, that's because of sin, right? That is what they believe. And that is what they're going to struggle with.

As, yeah, this great man who feared God suddenly faces unspeakable suffering. So, yeah, Margo and Betty are going to do the reading. It's a bit of an abridged version.

So, I've tried to kind of shorten it from 515 verses down to about 50. So, we're going to jump around. But hopefully, yeah, we can get a real feel of, yeah, how these guys struggle.

[ 5 : 20 ] So, Margo, Betty, why don't you come up? Because of the abridged format, please follow along on the screen or in your bulletin.

Then Alaphaz the Temanite answered and said, If one ventures a word with you, will you be impatient? Yet, who can keep from speaking?

Is not your fear of God your confidence? And the integrity of your ways your hope? Remember, who that was innocent ever perished? Or where were the upright cut off?

As for me, I would seek God. And to God would I commit my cause. For he wounds, but he binds up. He shatters, but his hands healed.

Then Job answered and said, Oh, that my vexation were weighed, and all my calamity laid in the balances. For the errors of the Almighty are in me.

[ 6 : 24 ] My spirit drinks their poison. The terrors of God are arrayed against me. Teach me, and I will be silent. Make me understand how I have gone astray.

Is there any injustice on my tongue? Cannot my palate discern the cause of calamity? Remember that my life is a breath. My eye will never again see good.

Then Bildet the Shuhite answered and said, How long will you say these things, and the words of your mouth be a great win? Does God pervert justice, or does the Almighty pervert the right?

If your children have sinned against him, he will deliver them into the hand of their transgression. If you will seek God and plead with the Almighty for mercy, if you are pure and upright, surely then he will rouse himself for you and restore your rightful habitation.

Truly I know that it is so. But how can a man be in the right before God? For he crushes me with a tempest and multiplies my wounds without cause.

[ 7 : 33 ] It is all one, therefore I say. He destroys both the blameless and the wicked. I will say to God, Do not condemn me. Let me know why you contend against me.

You have granted me life and steadfast love, and your care has preserved my spirit. Yet these things you hid in your heart. I know that this was your purpose.

Should a multitude of words go unanswered, and a man full of talk be judged right? For you say, My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in God's eyes.

But oh, that God would speak and open his lips to you, and that he would tell you the secrets of wisdom. For he is manifold in understanding. Know then that God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves.

If you prepare your heart, you will stretch out your hands towards him. If iniquity is in your hand, put it far away, and let not injustice dwell in your tents.

[ 8 : 35 ] No doubt you are the people, and wisdom will die with you. But I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to argue my case with God. How many are my iniquities and my sins?

Make me know my transgression and my sin. Oh, that you would hide me in Sheol, that you would conceal me until your wrath be passed, that you would appoint me a set time and remember me.

You would call, and I would answer you. You would long for the work of your hands. Should a wise man answer with windy knowledge and fill his belly with the east wind?

But you are doing away with the fear of God and hindering meditation before God. For your iniquity teaches your mouth, and you choose the tongue of the crafty.

I will show you. Hear me. And what I have seen, I will declare. The wicked man rives in pain all his days, through all the years that are laid up for the ruthless, because he has stretched out his hand against God and defies the Almighty.

[ 9 : 40 ] I have heard many such things. Miserable comforters are you all. I also could speak as you do if you were in my place. Surely now God has worn me out.

He has made desolate all my company. Although there is no violence in my hands, and my prayer is pure. Is not your evil abundant? There is no end to your iniquities.

For you have accepted pledges of your brothers for nothing, and stripped the naked of their clothing. You have given no water to the weary to drink, and you have withheld bread from the hungry.

You have sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless were crushed. Agree with God and be at peace. Thereby good will come to you. If you return to the Almighty, you will be built up. If you remove injustice far from your tents. Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat. But he knows the way that I take.

[ 10 : 41 ] When he has tried me, I shall come out as gold. Far be it from me to say that you are right. Till I die, I will not put away my integrity from me.

I hold fast my righteousness and will not let it go. My heart does not reproach me for any of my days. This is the word of God. Thanks so much, Margo and Betty.

I hope you get a feeling for this debate, right? The anguish of Job and the friends just digging their heels in. Yeah, it's a real debate.

But what should we see here? What is the feeling that we get from this argument? I think the big thing that we really feel, that Job feels, is that he feels justice denied, right?

He feels there's no justice. How can we see that? One article I read about Job put it very helpfully. So let me put three statements on the screen, right?

[ 11 : 48 ] Here are three things. Suffering is God's punishment. And then God is just. And Job is innocent. Now there are three statements, but they can't, given Job's suffering, they can't all be true, right?

They can't all three be true. But which one? So like I said, the friends and Job, they both think that suffering is God's punishment. But then what? Well, for the friends, it's very easy, right?

Job, well, God is just. Of course God is just. He's God, right? He's the Almighty. He is God. He is just. Well, if suffering is God's punishment, and God is just, then there's only one solution, right?

Job, you are not innocent, right? I mean, they start with, hey, if you're innocent, it'll be fine. Just pray. Just see God, and you'll be fine. He'll restore you. But that's not happening.

And so, they dig their heels in, right? Well, clearly, Job, clearly you've sinned, right? Clearly, there's something you've done wrong. Oh, Job, that God would just tell you how sinful you are.

[ 12 : 49 ] Job, your sins, oh, they are so abundant. Just repent, and then it'll be fine, right? That is the big message. They're simple. Their system is very simple.

Look, God is just, and you suffer, so you have sinned. That is it. But Job, on the other hand, yeah, he believes that. He believes that suffering is punishment, but he knows he's innocent.

And that's his struggle, right? So, it doesn't make any sense to him. I mean, he knows. The principle, so he asks God, okay, tell me, make me know my sin.

You know, how many are my sins and my iniquities? Tell me, God, I want to know, is there injustice on my tongue? Well, what is, he really wants to know. Of course, if he has done wrong, he wants to repent.

It's just that it doesn't make any sense to him, right? He doesn't, he doesn't feel anything. He doesn't see what he has done wrong. Well, and if that is true, if he is being punished, but he's innocent, well, well, God can't be just, right?

[ 13 : 52 ] That's almost what he concludes. God is not just. He is really, you can feel how he accuses God, right? The arrows of the almighty are in me. He's, he's, yeah, he's put me through the tempest.

He's against me. He's my adversary, my enemy. I want to speak to him because I can just feel that this is wrong, right? He feels, yeah, God is not just.

Just is denied. Right. It's very interesting, right? Because we read this and then who is right? I mean, the friends, they sound really good, right? They sound really good. You know, God is pure and he's holy and he's just, and he's great.

And, and, and Job, well, he says that God is a bully. No wonder the friends are angry. How dare you speak about God like this? And yet we know, well, we've read chapters one and two, right? We know the thing. Job actually, he is innocent and his suffering has nothing to do with punishment. All right. And, and so the friends, yeah, their conclusion is completely wrong.

[14:54] They, they have this system and they look, but it's completely wrong. It sounds good, but, but no, their, their simple system is doesn't work. Those Job suffering has nothing to do with justice, nothing to do with retribution, nothing to do with anything he's done wrong.

Hey, it is not out of justice. Now, how does that, what is the message? Well, clearly if you hear this and you've got these questions, well, how do you end up?

Well, this is, there, there's no simple answer, right? It's this, this very simple answer that everyone believes, that everyone around you believes that just not true. God's ways are not a very simple justice.

You know, you do right, you'll be blessed and you do wrong, you'll be punished. That's a very simple equation. And yet that's completely untrue. And so particularly in this case, you know, you read this, your, your suffering is unlikely to be the direct result of your sin.

Right? And let me put this clearly, right? If you read this, the, the, your suffering, if maybe some of you are going through a really hard time, it is probably not the, uh, uh, direct result of your sin.

[16:04] It could be hypothetically, but you know, that's what they think. And this chap, these chapters, as they dig in, it shows, no, no. Uh, of course the world is broken due to sin.

Of course, when Adam and Eve sinned, that's when everything went wrong. In some sense, of course, indirectly. Yes, all suffering is due to sin, but we make it into a direct thing, right? And so, you know, there was this tsunami 20 years ago and 250,000 people died.

Were they the 250,000 most sinful people on the planet? Well, no, right? It doesn't work like that. We can't make a kind of one-to-one link. So, if you're having a difficult time, it's easy to think, you know, what have I done wrong?

Uh, what is my sin? I mean, I must have done something wrong. And in a way, that's not a bad instinct. It's a good instinct, right? Because we, we know our hearts. We know we're sinners, right? If my wife is upset, my, my first reaction is, okay, what have I done? Right? I don't think it's, uh, her workmates. It's probably, it's probably me, right? Okay, darling, what is it?

[17:11] You know, but in this case, it's very different. This suffering of Job, it has nothing to do with punishment.

He is not the worst person, and this is what he deserves. Of course, you don't probably ask me, if it has nothing, if it has unlikely to be with my, anything to do with my sin. The question always comes here, but how about discipline?

Doesn't the Bible say that God disciplines those he loves? And we go through hard times, you know, all discipline is painful. It says, those kind of things. Well, sometimes God does discipline people for sin.

Although, remember, discipline is very different from punishment, right? Discipline is not punishment. Discipline is, is corrective. It's supposed to help people. You know, parents, when they, you know, correct their children, that that is correction.

It's not paying the kids back for what they've done. Absolutely not, right? It's, it's correction. And sometimes that happens. I mean, some of those natural consequences, guy commits adultery and he loses his marriage.

[18:13] That's very much due to his sin. And that is very much something that God lets happen for him to, hopefully to turn him away from his sin. The thing is, it's usually clear, right?

I mean, Job is happy to repent if there is some sin. And he asked God, please tell me, but he gets no answer. And he searches his heart and he can see nothing. And that's the thing.

Okay. It's, it's a good thing. Okay. Hey, I'm going through a tough time. You know, let me search my heart. Is there some sin? But if there is nothing, well, then don't feel guilty. I mean, I think God is able to communicate.

If you are really in some sin and God wants to get you out of there, he is able to make that clear to you. And some people, they have a view of God that basically God is kind of playing Pictionary. And do you know Pictionary?

You're not allowed to say anything. And you're just trying to draw and get the other people to get it. But they, they're stupid. They don't, they don't get it. And, but you can't say anything. Right? And that God, he really wants to tell us about some sin, but we just don't get it.

[ 19 : 15 ] And he's trying to draw in the sky. And now God can communicate. Right? If you have sinned and God is trying to turn you away from that sin, usually he will make that very clear to you.

And so if he doesn't, well, it's not due to your sin. And so don't feel guilty. That's the thing, right? We feel guilty.

Something goes wrong and we think it's our fault and we feel guilty. I mean, remember how Job, how much Job have felt? He had 10 children and they all died in one day. And how do you then feel if you think it's your fault?

And, and that is what his friends say to him. Hey, it's, you probably got some sin. Well, the children, maybe they died for their own sin and maybe it's for your sin, but it's, it's your fault. Isn't that so cruel, right?

It's your fault. And if you feel like that, if something happened to you and you feel guilty, this book says, no. I mean, you might think, well, we never say that as Christians, right?

[ 20 : 19 ] Actually, so some churches, they come very close to that. I don't know if you know the, what people call the prosperity gospel, right? Basically, God wants you to be rich and healthy.

You just need to obey. You just need to have enough faith. And, and then your God will bless you. God always wants to bless you. You just need to obey. You just need to have faith. And then it's fine.

I mean, it's a very simple system, right? But it's basically the same religion. But what if you're poor? Well, clearly it's your fault. Right? You didn't have enough faith. That's why you're not rich.

You're sick. You've got cancer. Well, it's your fault. You need to have more faith. Isn't that so cruel? Right? Actually, deep down when people say this, yeah, it's really cruel.

And, and ultimately, doesn't it diminish God, right? Doesn't it make God into a kind of vending machine? That, you know, you put obedience in, you get blessings out, and you put sin in, and you get punishment out.

[ 21 : 16 ] Just a vending machine. There's no relationship. I mean, you hear the friends, and basically, they're not that interested in God, right? They speak highly of God, but basically, well, Job, you know, just repent.

Just confess some sins, and you'll be fine. Right? And then you'll get the good stuff again. Basically, they're saying exactly the thing as Satan did in chapter one. You know, hey, Job only loves you because of your stuff.

And the friends say, hey, just repent, and then you'll get the stuff again. Now, Job, he loves God for who he is. That's why he wants to speak to God. That's why he, he doesn't want to just pretend something, to get things back.

He, he loves God. In a way, that's why his suffering hurts so much. He's lost his children. He's lost all his possessions, but he feels like he's lost God, right? Here's his, the greatest friend he has, God himself, and yet God is now his.

He says, you're like my enemy, my adversary. It's interesting. The, the, the, the word Job, it's a foreign name, but it's, it sounds, it looks a lot like the Hebrew word for enemy.

[ 22 : 23 ] That's the question of this book. Is God your enemy? When these things happen, when you suffer? No, we may wonder why we suffer. We might wonder why this terrible thing has happened to us.

We may not understand it, but don't let guilt make things worse. You're not being punished for your sin. God hasn't become your enemy. Of course, that may be fine.

That would be really good. But does Job then still think God is not just? Because that's what he's seen to be accusing God of, right? He asked some very big questions about God's justice.

If God is not just, of course, well, what's left of the world and his governing? Well, we need to find a way out. And actually, as Job goes through the reading, I didn't put that much in the reading.

Actually, he does find a way out. I mean, the friends are stuck. They just, they keep saying more about sin because it's the only solution they have. But Job evolves.

[ 23 : 24 ] And what does he see? I think that would be helpful to know. How does he see God's justice again? Well, justice is delayed. Justice is delayed. As Job goes through, you know, his friends keep going on.

God punishes the wicked. God punishes the wicked. And then Job actually goes, well, come on, hang on. Is that really true? Look at the world. Look around you. What is the world like? Actually, God doesn't seem to be doing that, right?

In chapter one, here's a few verses. You know, Job asks, why do the wicked live, reach old age, and grow mighty and power? How often is it that the lamp of the wicked is put out?

That their calamity comes upon them. That God distributes pains in his anger. You know, about these people, there's no doubt, right? There's no hidden right, hidden something.

It's very clear these people are wicked. They should be punished. And yet, they're living a really nice life. Isn't that in most of the world, right? The wicked, they're rich, and they oppress, and they're having a really nice life.

[ 24 : 26 ] It's a common complaint in the Bible. So, actually, Job starts to think, come on. Actually, this whole thing isn't true, right? It's not that suffering is God's punishment, because these people, you know, they don't suffer at all.

They're having a great life. And so, this first statement is not true, Job realizes. And slowly, slowly, he sees, okay, actually, this whole principle of religion, I don't see that.

Of course, does that mean God is unjust, that the innocent suffer, and the wicked prosper? Well, no, he sees injustice, and his heart breaks for it, and surely God sees that as well.

I mean, look how Job talks in chapter 24. You know, he sees the poor. They go about 10 to 12, 24, 10 to 12. They go about naked, without clothing.

Hungry, they carry the sheaves. Among the olive rows of the wicked, they make oil. They tread the wine presses, but suffer first. from out of the city, the dying groan, and the soul of the wounded cries for help.

[ 25 : 28 ] Yet God charges no one with wrong. Right? These poor people suffer. They're working for the wicked, and they get none of the blessings, right? They get none of the olives, none of the wine.

He just feels, this is so unjust. God, God must do something about it. And, well, yeah, you say it's now, right? Verse 18, you say, swift are they on the face of the waters.

Their portion is cursed in the land. Actually, it's not now. Yet God prolongs the life of the mighty by his power. Now, I think he will do it later.

Verse 24, they are exalted a little while, and then are gone. They are brought low and gathered up like all the others. Job starts to see, well, God will be just, but it's just not now.

Justice is delayed. And that is how he gets out of this thing, right? The simple, basic religion that they all think about, that's just not true. God, hopefully, he trusts he will do it later.

[ 26 : 28 ] It's complicated. We see a world of sin. We see a world of injustice. And we always wonder, when is God going to do something about it? Well, there is just much more to God than we know.

He's got something bigger. And that is where Job ends up, right? In chapter 26, you know, God made the heavens and the earth, and he rules everything. And, and, you know, 26, 14, behold, these are but the outskirts of his ways.

There is so much more to God that we don't know. How small a whisper do we hear of him? The thunder of his power. Who can understand? Now, it doesn't solve everything for Job.

Not fully. I mean, he still wonders, okay, why, okay, maybe God will be just later, but why do I have to go through this now? You know, this is such unspeakable horror. Why? He still wants to meet with God.

He still wants answers. He still thinks, okay, God, can you explain this to me? But, he is no longer stuck in the old system. And, and, and the book of Job isn't over yet.

[ 27 : 30 ] There's more wrestling to do. Just for now, it's not that simple. And, and just to say, well, we're going to get back to this in the next few weeks. But, for now, if you're, certainly if you're here and you're not a Christian, this is such a common objection, right?

Why doesn't God do something about all the suffering in the world? And all the wickedness in the world? Why doesn't he do something? And, I went to a funeral on Friday. I sat in a bus next to someone.

Yeah, not a Christian. Why? Well, all the suffering. Well, let me encourage you. It's not as simple. Many of us look for a very simple answer.

You know, just a, hey, sin. Something like that. It's not simple. The Bible says, it's delayed. God will do that later, and for good reasons. And so, that means you need to just, work on the bigger picture. That there's a bigger picture that you need to see. And the problem is, if you're just stuck, and you want a simple answer, you're not going to get anywhere. How does Job get out of things?

[ 28 : 33 ] Well, because he keeps wrestling. He is an open mind. He is, he's wondering, okay, what's going on? And he, he wrestles, and he reflects, and he actually gets somewhere. His friends, they are stuck.

They get nowhere. And so, can I encourage you to have an open mind, and to, to keep exploring this. I think there are good answers, when you see the bigger picture. There's just not a simple answer.

That, you know, people suffer because God doesn't care. That's the thing we always think. No, it's not like that. No, what do we need to see?

You may wonder, why does God delay? Wouldn't the world be a lot better, if God just does this? If God is like that? If he just punishes, and corrects? Isn't Hong Kong a much better place?

Because of, you know, all the parking fines, and no illegal parking. Surely, the world may be a better place. No. I think it depends how we think.

[ 29 : 29 ] I think one problem we have, with the book of Job, and all this talk about sin, and righteousness, is that we always think, in relative terms. And the Bible, often thinks in relative terms, but other times, it does work in absolute terms.

I mean, was Job a blameless, and upright man? Well, the Bible says, yes, he was, right? But, as we all know, that is only relative, compared to, relatively wicked people.

But, was Job absolutely blameless? Was he absolutely upright? You know, before an infinitely perfect God? Well, no, right? I mean, when he says, I hold fast my righteousness, does he think he have enough righteousness, absolutely, before God?

No, it's a relative thing, right? That's why people say here, you know, who can be right before God? What would happen, if we really think in absolute? What if, you know, we would really see the world, through God's perspective?

Then things are very different, right? I think that's the problem, with the friend, they're just confusing, relative and absolute. You know, so far as he says, oh, that God would show you, how sinful you are, and how much your guilt deserves.

[ 30 : 42 ] I mean, if that is, actually, if God does that, yeah, things are different, right? I mean, who is really righteous before God? No one, right?

If God really would do that, if he would punish every sin, then, well, none of us would be alive, there would be no human race. That kind of thing. If we think in absolutes, that is suddenly when the picture is different.

And the best way to see that, well, where God really answers Zophar's prayer, and shows us what our guilt deserves, well, we need to go to the cross, right? Where we see justice fulfilled.

Ultimately, this passage erases questions about sin and punishment, and that goes to the cross. Because when we see Jesus on the cross, what do we see? We think we see an innocent man suffer.

And we think of someone like Job, right? Here's a man who is relatively innocent, who is facing some unjust suffering. And yet, Jesus was innocent in a completely different way, right?

[ 31 : 45 ] Jesus wasn't relatively innocent. Jesus was completely, absolutely perfect. He was righteous. He was the only man who never should suffer, who didn't deserve to suffer.

I mean, in the Bible, actually, it's true. Suffering is always due to sin. Right? The whole reason there is suffering in the world is because of sin.

And all of us, we always suffer less than we deserve. Actually. But then how about Jesus? If he, if suffering is always for sin, and he was completely righteous, why did he get punished for sin?

Why did he suffer? And the Bible says, well, it was not for his own sin. The Bible wants us to see this suffering was for sin, but it was not his sin. He suffered for our sin.

All right? When we see the absolute truth, then, okay, then we suddenly see on the cross what our sins deserve, right? You see Jesus going through hell. You see him being forsaken by God.

[ 32 : 46 ] Well, that is how much your guilt deserves. That is actually God showing us how sinful we are. And at the same time, it completely changes things.

If Jesus really did that, because why? Because he has paid for your punishment. Right? If we really deserve all this punishment, but Jesus paid for it, that really changes things.

Because sometimes when we suffer, yeah, we, we know this, right? We do feel it's our fault. We might think, well, I'm relatively okay, but deep down, we all know, right? That we have this fear that it's about us.

God, our sin. And we fear that we are not really righteous. That's kind of our religious heart, right? We want to, we know we are sinners before God, but the cross actually says, no, your suffering is not punishment.

Whatever you're going through, it's not punishment for your sin. Not because you're so good, but because it has already been paid on the cross. Because Jesus paid for it.

[ 33 : 50 ] And God is just, and he will never pay for the same sin. He'll never depend on payment twice for the same sin. And Job knew that it wasn't punishment because he was relatively innocent.

If you're a Christian, you know, suffering is not punishment because you are absolutely innocent. Not because of anything in you, but because Jesus already paid for everything.

We are truly righteous, truly accepted, truly perfect, truly innocent, because it's already paid. Right? So as Christians, we can go beyond Job. On the other hand, on one hand, we can admit our sin. I'm happy to admit that I'm not righteous. On the other hand, we are perfectly righteous through Christ, right?

Because he already paid everything. And we can trust him. And that suddenly means that we have far more assurance than Job. Job had all these questions.

[ 34 : 49 ] Actually, we have the answer in the cross. Right? You know, in the Bible, people say, if you are suffering, look to the cross.

Let it assure you. Because it means your sin has been paid. And you're not suffering out of punishment. And the greatest passage in the Bible, I think, is the end of Romans 8.

And it deals with suffering, right? What does Paul question? You know, who shall separate us from the love of Christ? 835. Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

That's the question, right? All these bad things are happening to us. Does it mean God doesn't love us? Have we been separated from the love of Christ? And he says, no. Absolutely not, right?

In all these things, we are more than conquerors for him who loved us. For I'm sure that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, nor the present, nor the future, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

[ 35 : 58 ] You can hear that, right? We can be absolutely sure that God loves us. And why? Well, because of the cross. Because God is now for us.

Right? God, if God is for us, who can be against us? You know, Job was wondering, God, are you my enemy? Are you my adversary? Paul says, no, God is for you.

Because, he's paid for your sins. And, you are now righteous. Right? verse 33, who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

Who is to condemn? You can't be condemned. There's nothing to punish. Because Christ Jesus, who died, more than that, who was raised alive, is at the right hand of God, and is interceding for you.

Now, we may not understand everything. We may not understand, why some things happen to us. Why God lets it happen. The only thing, that if we see the cross, we can't doubt God's love for us.

[ 36 : 59 ] We can't doubt, that we are accepted. We can't doubt, that we are righteous in his sight. Because, Jesus paid for everything. And, God is just.

It would be unjust to punish us. And, he won't. Isn't that, the most wonderful truth, right? God wants to know, wants you to know this. He wants to know that he's for, he wants you to know that he's for you.

He wants you to know, that he wants the best for you. He wants you to know, that he will bring you home, out of the midst of all of this. Because, Jesus paid for everything, on the cross.

Let's be encouraged, by those words. Why don't we take a moment, just to reflect. A moment to, of silence, as you think about the cross, and maybe what you're going through, and seeing that in the

light of the cross.

And, then I'll pray, and Jeremy will, and the music team will, will help us reflect more. And, you know, what we've got to do?

[ 38 : 08 ] Let me pray.

Lord Jesus, we thank you so much that you paid, that you died to the death that we deserve to make us righteous, to make us perfect, to make us deserving despite us being so undeserving. Lord, we want to know that cross. We want to, in everything that we face, be reminded of your love and what you have done and how that changes everything about our situation.

And we struggle with that. We know that we see around us. We know our hearts that condemn us. But we want to be reminded of your love. Please help us see how nothing can separate us from your love because of what you've done.

In your name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[ 39 : 30 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.