

Job's Questions

1. Intro / Context

- Sadly, each day in Australia, 7 people choose to take their own life
 - That is, over 2,500 people a year die from suicide
 - To give you some perspective, that is more than double the number of those who die in motor vehicle accidents each year
- Those most likely to take their own life are young males, older men, Indigenous young men and rural residents
 - Suicide is the highest cause of death in people aged 15-35 apart from car accidents
- It's a terrible, terrible reality of living in a fallen, broken world
- Major reason that people choose to take their own life is undiagnosed depression or mental illness¹
 - Last year a friend of mine's son > depression > took his life > just 16yo
 - Last month a school friend > depression > also took her own life
 - A number of years ago another friend of mine > depression > attempted to take his life
- Depression is a complicated thing and there are many reasons that may trigger depression
- One is the experience of one or multiple negative life experiences such as
 - death of a loved one
 - A serious loss > such as a loss of a job, house, or money.
 - A serious illness
 - Chronic physical pain
 - Being victimized or abused
 - Alcohol or drug abuse
 - Post-natal depression which affects 14% of new mothers
 - A feeling of not being accepted by family, friends, or society
 - List could go on
- Pain and suffering are a reality of living in a fallen, broken world and it effects all of us in some way
 - Either directly as you suffering
 - Indirectly as you see people you know and love suffering

¹ <http://www.suicide.org/suicide-causes.html>

- How do you deal with such suffering that leads you to such pain and darkness that you feel like the only way out is death?
- Even Christians who understand they are made in the image of God and somewhat understand God's plans for us ...
 - still struggle to make sense of suffering in this world
 - and struggle to deal with suffering in their own life
- What do you do if you in those times of pain and darkness when you are suffering
 - What do you do if you're not happy and you know it > clapping your hands ... all day, every day?
 - Does the Bible have any wisdom on this?
- In Job 3 we see Job suffering in deep pain and darkness
 - On the brink of taking his own life
 - And yet he doesn't
- In Job 1-2 we watched this blameless believer suffer heart-rendering loss
 - His wealth was lost
 - His children were killed
 - His health was destroyed
- And as the readers we were able to listen into the conversation in heaven between God and Satan that lay behind Job's loss
- We saw heard how Satan accused Job of not loving God for who he is
 - *"You've put hedge of protection around him*
 - *"He only loves you because you bless him with so much*
 - *"Remove all his stuff and then we'll see his true colours*
- In order to prove
 - God is worthy of our love and trust alone; and
 - Job's faith is genuine and true; and therefore
 - God allows Satan to go out and afflict Job so that Satan can be put back in his box
 - And Job loses everything > property > wealth > family and his health
 - He loses everything
- And yet despite all his suffering he continues to trust God and remarkably still manages to worship God for being sovereign over all things

- **ASIDE**

- Asked last week is story of Job a parable?
 - Is Job a historical figure ... or is this just a story to teach us something?
 - > like Jesus told story of Good Samaritan to teach the Jews how to love others?
 - Golden rule when trying to interpret the Bible is ...
 - See how the Bible interprets itself
 - If the Bible is God's word > inspired by the HS > then it should be the first place we look to in order to understand a passage in of the Bible
 - So with the question about the historicity of Job the first thing to do is look to see if there are other mentions of Job in the Bible and see if those verses shed any light on it
 - In Ezekiel 14:14 & 20 > God is speaking to the prophet Ezekiel and refers to Job
 - Clear from the context that he understands Job to be a real person and historical figure
 - So even though we don't have historical markers in the book of Job to indicate Job as historical vs parable, the other references in the Bible to Job would indicate he was a real man of history

2. The pain and darkness of our suffering

- At the beginning of Ch 3 ... after sitting in silence for seven days ... Job finally speaks
 - And when he speaks ... we get a deep insight into the pain and darkness and anguish that is going in his soul
 - It's very raw > it's very real
- After a week of mourning and meditating and digesting all that had happened to him ... we see in 3:1
 - *Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth.*
- And for the next 9 verses he basically says
 - I wish I was never born (v1-10)
 - We normally celebrate our birthdays > but Job curses his
 - Wished the day he was born never happened
 - Wished the night he was conceived had been barren
 - Wished that creation could be reversed and that day scrubbed from history

- He even wishes in v8 that professional spell casters would rouse Leviathan to take away that day
- What's Leviathan?
 - Is it a whale > sea creature > dinosaur?
 - Bottom line is we don't know
 - What we do know that Leviathan was a seven headed dragon of Canaanite mythology that ate up the sun
- Job pictures Leviathan as having professional curse bringers who act like Leviathan's keepers and he's effectively wishing they would whistle for Leviathan and call him to come and destroy day he was born
- So great is his pain and suffering ... he would prefer if that day had never come

- In v11-19, he continues to lament
- Because he was conceived and born ... he goes on to say that he wishes died at birth
 - That he was still born > had been buried at birth
 - Why?
 - v13 - *For now I would be lying down in peace; I would be asleep and at rest*
 - In other words
 - *"I wouldn't be suffering*
 - *"Wouldn't have to be going through all this anguish*
 - *"If I was dead and in grave ... I wouldn't have to deal with the pain an darkness*
 - He sees death as an escape from the suffering of life

- He thinks death is the only way out of his pain and darkness because life is so painful

- **Application**
- Job 3 teaches us a number of things
- One thing it teaches us is that being faithful believer is no guarantee of health, wealth and happiness
 - Some preachers you see on TV / some authors will write books that teach that if you trust in Jesus he'll solve you're your problems and bless you with everything you've ever wanted

- Come to church, say your prayers, read the Bible and hey presto ... God will bless you and answer your prayers and your life will be awesome!
- This passage shows us that's not real
 - Job was one of God's friends > blameless, upright, God's servant
 - Yet here he is in deep pain and darkness
- Don't buy the lie that being a Christian will solve all your problems and bring untold blessing to your life
 - Flip side ... don't doubt the genuineness of your faith because you're going through dark and painful times and not getting the blessing
 - Right through the Bible ... Moses, Elijah, David, Daniel, John, Paul ... all men of deep faith and godliness suffered throughout their life
- There may be times when you are going through pain and darkness but that in no way negates the genuineness of your faith nor the goodness and love of God for you
- In addition ... Job 3 is an extremely helpful counterbalance to Job 1-2
- Because what it shows is that human suffering is not two dimensional
 - This book is not simply telling us - Job suffered and then he worshipped and so should we, end of story
 - That's way too simplistic
 - Job 3 shows us his suffering was much more real than that
 - He was going through genuine pain and anguish and he was venting that to his friends
- The Bible doesn't teach us that when suffering comes along you just need a march on > stiff upper lip > not complain
 - We're not to take away from the book of Job this idea that
 - "Oh well, this suffering is pretty bad, But thank God Jesus has come and now it is all OK"
 - It's not OK > it hurts ... and its dishonest to pretend that
- Bible is much more real than that
 - Christianity is not stoicism
 - Christianity recognises the reality of the pain and darkness we experience of living in our broken world
 - And ... yet it offers hope and light in the midst of that

- Having said that there is much to learn from Job 3 ... there are some issues this chapter raises

- Was Job sinning in the things he said here?
- Is it a sin to wish you had never been born?
 - Depends
 - If it lasts and becomes a settled conclusion – that's a sin
 - The mere fleeting thought that passes through your mind because of something you are suffering through ... that's a temptation ... but not a sin
 - Jesus was tempted > but was without sin
 - Do not confuse the fiery darts of the Evil One with your own moral failure

- Is it a sin to wish you were dead like Job?
 - Depends
 - If it lasts ... and becomes a settled conclusion ... yes > because it's a rejection of God and his sovereignty and the life he has given you
 - If just a temptation ... not a sin

- Is suicide a sin? Is it a sin to follow through on thoughts like Job had where you wish you were dead, and take your own life?
 - Yes it is ... no depending on it ... that's a sin
 - Not only is suicide committing murder on themselves
 - Challenge to the sovereignty of God ... who as Job says ... is the only one who has the right to give and take away life

- Is it possible for a Christian to commit suicide?
 - Yes it is ... beyond a shadow of a doubt

- Many people are confused on this because of the teaching on this by the Catholic Church
 - Catholic Church teaches there are mortal and venial sins
 - Venial sins are normal sins / "forgivable" sin > they're sins that don't result in a complete separation from God
 - Mortal sins are those sins that do result in a complete separation from God ... and if you don't repent specifically of that sin ... then you are eternally helpless

- But this is not what the Bible teaches!

- Bible teaches that we are not saved by our ability to repent of every sin we know of ... but only by the grace of God in Jesus Christ
- We are saved by the fully sufficient death of Jesus on the cross
- We repent of our sins > we trust in Christ for our salvation > and then he saves us
- His death is fully sufficient to save us for ALL our sins

- So can a Christian fall into such depression and despair that they take their own life ... and yet still be Christian > Yes
 - Just like you and I fall into sin yet can still truly be trusting in Jesus for our salvation
 - You or I can walk out of here and get hit by a car and not have confessed to lying, pride, anger, adultery, selfishness ... and that doesn't negate the saving work on the cross for those who trust in Christ
 - And the same is true for those who take their own life

- Not trying to diminish suicide
 - A horrendous tragedy
 - But it's not beyond the grace of God in Christ Jesus

- By the way ... if someone asks you that question ... "Is suicide a sin?" ... don't jump straight in with and just give them a theological answer
 - It's more than likely there is a real issue lying behind their question
 - Better to respond far more pastorally by asking
 - "Why do you ask?"
 - "It sounds like things are really hard for you. Please tell me what's happening."

3. The hope and light in suffering

- So we know the reality of suffering and it's good to know that the Bible doesn't just teach us to stoically deal with suffering
 - But is there a way forward?
 - Is there something to help us deal with the hard times we are / will go through?

- Is there anything to say to Job in his suffering
 - Anything beyond
 - the silence of bankruptcy
 - anguish of lost loved ones
 - pain of ruined health

- Even in the midst of the pain and darkness of his suffering, there remains a glimmer of hope
- We see this in particular in the fact that he's asking these questions
 - *Why were there knees to receive me*
 - *Why was I not hidden in the ground like a stillborn child*
 - *Why is light given to those in misery*
 - *Why is life given to a man whose way is hidden*
- The fact that he's asking questions shows he understands God must have reasons for allowing him to live despite all that he's going through
 - Yet questioning indicates there must something bigger than him at play
 - His restlessness > his questioning > his anguish ... show there's still a glimmer of hope for him
- For if he'd given up hope
 - If he thought there was no point living he would bother
 - If he had transferred over to atheism he wouldn't bother asking the questions
- His questioning and restlessness is not the mark of a defeated man who has given up hope and resigned himself to his fate
 - If there really was no hope ... there'd be no point asking "Why?"
- But even in his darkness and pain ... Job recognises that there is still light and life
 - v20 - "*Why is **light** given to those in misery, and **life** to the bitter of soul ...*"
 - *Again in v23 - "Why is **life** given to a man whose way is hidden, whom God has hedged in?"*
- There must be reasons why God
 - *Is giving light to those in misery*
 - *Life to the bitter of soul*
- God must have something bigger than me and beyond my understanding if he continues to give *life* to a man *whom God has hedged in*
- There is a glimmer of hope
 - Even though Job questions ... "Why is God allowing this?"
 - It none-the-less shows there is light and life for Job ...
 - even if he can't yet see it
 - even if it will take some time for that glimmer to become a ray

- **Application**

- Friends ... do sometimes feel like Job?
- Do you sometimes find yourself in times of pain and darkness asking questions like Job ...
 - Does that not indicate to you that deep down you know there is something better > something greater > something more beyond what you currently know and are experiencing?
 - Doesn't that give you just a glimmer of hope that there is light and life beyond the pain and darkness you are going through now?
- If you're here today and you'd say you're not yet a Christian ... and you're asking those "Why?" questions of God ...
 - Is that maybe an indication that you may not be as much an unbeliever as you think you are?
 - If you'd like to ponder that some more, speak to me afterwards about what it means to be a Christian and the sure and certain hope you can have in Christ
- Because friends the Bible teaches us ... there is hope > there is light and life beyond the suffering of today
- The Bible teaches us that we carry on with that hope ...
 - not because it reveals to us
 - the specifics of every single question we have
 - the reason why we're experiencing the pain and darkness of today
 - but because Bible
 - reveals to us the truth about a God who we know is sovereign and that we can trust
 - it reveals to us the plans and purposes of a good God who loves his creation so much he was willing to enter into it and suffering for himself for us
 - it reveals how he plans to restore and renew and redeem the brokenness and fallen nature of this world and therefore our lives
- Let me give you an example
 - If you have a 2-3yo child ... you're not going to explain everything to them ... because they won't understand it
 - But they will do things that are very scary for them because they know you ... trust you as their parent
 - Same with us and God

- Not that the Bible gives us special knowledge that we know everything and why everything happens > why natural disaster happened or cancer
 - No ... we know there is a good God who we can trust in completely
 - So we can go into situations that are challenging ...
 - not because we have all the answers
 - but because we see the character of the one who invites us to hold his hand through that dark and painful time
- I don't know what dark and painful times you are dealing with at the moment
 - Maybe with your children
 - Maybe your job
 - Maybe dealing with depression
 - Maybe a painful relationship
- We live in a fallen world ... but friends ... joys in our life are also opportunities for pain
 - You see that with Job
 - His love for his family was the very road that pain travelled into his life
- So is the answer to stop loving people?
 - No! The answer is to trust God through the pain ... knowing in him there is hope and life

4. The pain and darkness of Christ's suffering

- The hope we have in the midst our suffering comes from knowing that God is sovereign and we can trust him
- In his despair, Job had a glimmer of that hope that meant ... even though he longed for death more than those who search for hidden treasure ... that glimmer of hope was sufficient to prevent him taking his own life and seeing death as the only way forward
- Friends, 2,000 years later ...
 - that glimmer of hope that Job had ...
 - that faint ray of light that he saw ...
 - has become for us become a beacon of light
- The coming of Jesus into our world is described by the Apostle John as the light who shines brightly in the darkness

- Jesus himself said *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* (John 8:12)
- The coming of Jesus Christ would shine light into the darkness of this world and the darkness of our lives as proof that there is hope
 - That the brokenness of this world will be restored
 - The pain and the darkness of our lives will be overcome
- The light of the world would show us with even greater clarity and certainty than Job had ... that God is sovereign and we truly can trust him
- Like Job ...
 - Jesus suffered pain and darkness ...
 - Deeper than Job's
 - Deeper than ours
 - As darkness covered the land and Jesus hung nailed to a cross and he bore the wrath of God for human sin
- Like Job ...
 - Jesus cried out "Why?" when he said on the cross "My God My God, why have you forsaken me?"
- Like Job ...
 - Jesus had the hope of something better to come
 - Resurrection and the coming of a new creation
- He endured his pain and darkness ... so that you and I
 - Us Job's who are going through our own pain and darkness
 - Might know for certain that there is hope beyond our suffering
 - That he brings light into our darkness
 - And life that is glorious, good and eternal
- And with the light of that good news shining brightly before us
 - We can live in and through our pain and darkness
 - Knowing for sure that God is sovereign and can be trusted
- For he was willing to enter into our pain and suffering
 - Not so that we wouldn't suffer
 - But so we would know there is hope and life beyond our suffering

PRAY