

The Book of Job
Part Three
Job's Three Friends

- *The Book of Job deals head on with the question, “Why do the righteous suffer?” It is the only book in the Bible that deals specifically with this question.*
- *We may suffer for many reasons:*
- *Because of our own wrong choices or actions.*
- *Because of the sinful choices or actions of other people.*
- *Because we live in a fallen world.*
- *God wants to do a work in our life, and sometimes He needs to take drastic action to get our attention.*
- *The Book of Job offers another reason for suffering—because of our righteousness. Jesus confirmed this reason in the beatitudes. (Matthew 5:11). Righteousness as a reason for suffering is not restricted to the Old Testament.*
- *Job's trial and sufferings resulted from his desire to walk righteously before God. Job's unwavering faithfulness to God in the midst of his suffering actually resulted in the trial continuing and intensifying.*
- *Some have mistakenly thought this was a match between God and Satan, where God would prove that His servant Job would remain faithful even in the face of tremendous suffering.*
- *To think that God was trying to prove something to Satan and that Job was simply a pawn in this game, trivializes suffering and indicates a total misunderstanding of the heart and love of God.*
- *God wasn't motivated to prove Satan wrong at the expense of Job. He wanted to bless Job and grant Job the desires of his heart.*
- *God actually used Satan as a pawn to bring forth His purposes and glory in Job's life!*

- *Job's sufferings encompassed every possible area of his soul and body from emotional, to mental, and physical. Every area of his life was devastated.*
- *He suffered the loss of his wealth and possessions. He suffered the loss of his children.*
- *He suffered the loss of his health and was afflicted with the most painful disease.*
- *He was afflicted by a wife who despised his suffering and even goaded him on to commit suicide.*
- *However, the final attack on Job came from his three friends who presumably came to comfort him, but actually inflicted merciless attacks on Job's already wounded soul.*
- *They unceasingly accused him of bringing on his losses and sufferings himself, by being the worst of sinners.*
- *They then redoubled their attacks by accusing Job of prolonging his sufferings by being an unrepentant evildoer.*
- *Before Job's journey of suffering began, Job and his three friends shared the same theology.*
- *"Those who seek God and walk before Him faithfully will be blessed and protected from suffering, sickness, and calamity. However, those who walk in iniquity and rebellion will suffer sickness, tragedy, and defeat." They believed that people suffer in direct proportion to their sin.*
- *Job's theology and that of his three friends could be said to be more incomplete and overly simplistic than totally wrong.*
- *However, incomplete theology when applied incorrectly will result in wrong conclusions about circumstances, people, and God.*
- *Incomplete theology results in a distorted view of God and hinders our relationship with Him.*

- *When Job's three friends arrived and saw the devastation and suffering that had befallen him, they sat speechless with him for an entire week.*

Job 3:11–12 (NKJV)

¹¹**“Why did I not die at birth? Why did I not perish when I came from the womb?**

¹²**Why did the knees receive me? Or why the breasts, that I should nurse?**

- *Job was the first to speak. Chapter three contains his words.*
- *Job's suffering and pain was so great that he failed to see any point to his life and questioned why he did not die at birth.*
- *The first of Job's friends to speak was Eliphaz the Temanite, who spoke from the point of view of human experience.*

Job 4:1–6 (NKJV)

¹**Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said:**

²**“If one attempts a word with you, will you become weary? But who can withhold himself from speaking?**

³**Surely you have instructed many, And you have strengthened weak hands.**

⁴**Your words have upheld him who was stumbling, And you have strengthened the feeble knees;**

⁵**But now it comes upon you, and you are weary; It touches you, and you are troubled.**

⁶**Is not your reverence your confidence? And the integrity of your ways your hope?**

- *Eliphaz began his discourse by belittling Job's sufferings by saying, “You who were so wise to give counsel and comfort to others, but now when a little trouble touches you, you are so weak that you collapse.”*
- *Eliphaz continued by questioning Job's integrity, “If you are God fearing and you lived a life of integrity, then where is your hope and confidence?”*
- *Why did Eliphaz begin his speech to his friend Job with such a rebuke?*
- *Because Eliphaz believed that if one lives a life of integrity, God will protect him from suffering and will bless him.*
- *Eliphaz expected Job to begin by confessing all his terrible secret sins that caused this calamity to befall him and his family. Instead Job was totally*

perplexed at his present pain and complained about the suffering he was enduring.

Job 4:7–9 (NKJV)

⁷“Remember now, who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright ever cut off?

⁸Even as I have seen, Those who plow iniquity And sow trouble reap the same.

⁹By the blast of God they perish, And by the breath of His anger they are consumed.

- *These verses summarize Eliphaz’s theology—that wrong doers suffer and the righteous are blessed.*
- *Eliphaz argued from the point of view of human experience.*
- *Eliphaz turned to his observations to confirm his theology, “Remember now, who ever perished being innocent?”*
- *Eliphaz continued by sharing a supernatural experience during a night vision.*

Job 4:12–21 (NKJV)

¹²“Now a word was secretly brought to me, And my ear received a whisper of it.

¹³In disquieting thoughts from the visions of the night, When deep sleep falls on men,

¹⁴Fear came upon me, and trembling, Which made all my bones shake.

¹⁵Then a spirit passed before my face; The hair on my body stood up.

¹⁶It stood still, But I could not discern its appearance. A form was before my eyes; There was silence; Then I heard a voice saying:

¹⁷“Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker?

¹⁸If He puts no trust in His servants, If He charges His angels with error,

¹⁹How much more those who dwell in houses of clay, Whose foundation is in the dust, Who are crushed before a moth?

²⁰They are broken in pieces from morning till evening; They perish forever, with no one regarding.

²¹Does not their own excellence go away? They die, even without wisdom.’

- *Eliphaz, frustrated with Job’s refusal to admit that his terrible secret sins have caused all this suffering and calamity, basically said, “Everyone is a sinner before God and no one acts righteously.”*

- *This sounds correct, but the attitude behind it is, “I can’t figure out what your sins are, but everyone is a sinner and deserves to be punished.”*
- *Eliphaz used this supernatural experience to develop and confirm his theology and justify condemning Job.*
- *Eliphaz never actually tested his night vision to gauge its validity.*
- *People who never test prophetic words or supernatural experiences can develop strange theology.*
- *Eliphaz’s night vision seemed to instill only fear and hopelessness, “Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker? If He puts no trust in His servants, If He charges His angels with error, how much more those who dwell in houses of clay.”*
- *It sounds like, “No matter what we do, we can never please God.”*
- *Eliphaz did not test this revelation, but used it to condemn Job by saying there must be something wrong with him. He must have done something to deserve this suffering, because everyone is unrighteous.*
- *But the truth is that Job’s sufferings were the result of his righteousness.*
- *In studying this supposed revelation it is interesting that it says, “He charges His angels with error.” Which angels? The fallen angels! It sounds like this is a demonic message meant to confuse.*
- *There is not a single example in the Bible where God condemned or was displeased with His angelic messengers.*
- *“God puts no trust in His servants” –The truth is that there are many examples of godly men and women with important tasks whom God has entrusted to bring the gospel message to His church.*

Job 5:17–18 (NKJV)

¹⁷“Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty.

¹⁸For He bruises, but He binds up; He wounds, but His hands make whole.

- *Eliphaz's advice to Job, "Be glad that God is chastening you for your sins. Repent and He will restore you."*
- *Eliphaz's theology was totally correct, in fact, Hebrews 12:5 and Proverbs 3:11 say exactly the same thing.*
- *The only problem was that it didn't apply to Job or his situation.*

Job 6:2–5 (NKJV)

²"Oh, that my grief were fully weighed, And my calamity laid with it on the scales!

³For then it would be heavier than the sand of the sea—Therefore my words have been rash.

- *Job admitted his words had been rash, but he spoke that way because of the intensity of his suffering.*

⁴For the arrows of the Almighty are within me; My spirit drinks in their poison; The terrors of God are arrayed against me.

⁵Does the wild donkey bray when it has grass, Or does the ox low over its fodder?

- *Job attributed his suffering to coming directly from the hand of God.*
- *At the beginning of Job's trial his response, although noble, already showed a misunderstanding about God and the source of his suffering. He attributed his trial as coming directly from God's hand, "the Lord gave, the Lord has taken away." (Job 2:21)*
- *There are two things that Job's theology contained that showed his theology was incomplete and overly simplistic; "If your life is right before God, then He will protect you from all suffering, and everything that happens is directly from God."*

Job 6:24 (NKJV)

²⁴"Teach me, and I will hold my tongue; Cause me to understand wherein I have erred.

- *The response that Job gave to his friends in Job 6:24 incensed them and caused them to intensify their attacks against him.*

- *Job was saying, “Just show me where I have sinned or what I have done wrong to cause all these calamities to befall me and I will repent.”*
- *Why would Job’s request for them to show him where he has sinned cause his three friends to become so angry and malicious?*
- *His three friends were totally convinced that suffering and sickness only comes to those who have sinned or turned away from God. Anger rose when they couldn’t find a single instance where Job had sinned.*
- *His three friends, instead of admitting they didn’t know of anything he has done wrong, lashed out at Job in frustration.*

Job 22:5–10 (NKJV)

⁵Is not your wickedness great, And your iniquity without end?

⁶For you have taken pledges from your brother for no reason, And stripped the naked of their clothing.

⁷You have not given the weary water to drink, And you have withheld bread from the hungry.

⁸But the mighty man possessed the land, And the honorable man dwelt in it.

⁹You have sent widows away empty, And the strength of the fatherless was crushed.

¹⁰Therefore snares are all around you, And sudden fear troubles you,

- *Out of frustration, his three friends made up fictitious sins—in other words they were saying, “Don’t confuse us with the facts, we’ve already made up our minds.”*

Job 7:7 (NKJV)

⁷Oh, remember that my life is a breath! My eye will never again see good.

- *Job’s sufferings were so intense that he had totally given up hope of ever seeing deliverance or restoration in his life.*
- *Three things attacked Job’s faith:*
- *The pain, loss, and suffering of the circumstances that enveloped him.*
- *His three “comforters” who continually condemned him viciously and without any reason.*
- *God’s apparent silence to his pleas and cries.*

- *However, in reality God was not disinterested or unmoved by Job's sufferings, but was moving the process forward to see him fully restored, and with such a blessing that he could never have imagined.*
- *The next to speak is Bildad the Shuhite, and he argued from the point of view of human tradition. His speech was punctuated with logic.*

Job 8:1–4 (NKJV)

¹Then Bildad the Shuhite answered and said:

²“How long will you speak these things, And the words of your mouth be like a strong wind?

³Does God subvert judgment? Or does the Almighty pervert justice?

⁴If your sons have sinned against Him, He has cast them away for their transgression.

- *Bildad began by sounding very pious and logical, “Does the Almighty pervert justice?” Of course the answer to his statement was that God does not pervert justice.*
- *Bildad reached a false conclusion: If God cannot do wrong, then you must be wrong.*
- *Then in the same breath, Bildad concluded that Job's children perished because they had sinned again God.*

Job 8:8–11 (NKJV)

⁸“For inquire, please, of the former age, And consider the things discovered by their fathers;

⁹For we were born yesterday, and know nothing, Because our days on earth are a shadow.

¹⁰Will they not teach you and tell you, And utter words from their heart?

¹¹“Can the papyrus grow up without a marsh? Can the reeds flourish without water?

- *“Can the papyrus grow up without a marsh?” - Then Bildad continued by referring to the traditions of men and employed a number of common sayings, showing that if something happens there is always a reason why it happened.*
- *Bildad's arguments were logical and he was an analytical and cold-hearted debater, totally oblivious to the great pain he was inflicting on Job.*

- *To Bildad the world was black and white and the answers were simple and straightforward. “Job was suffering because he sinned. Because his suffering was very great, his sins must have been very great.”*
- *One of the problems with Bildad’s approach is that it assumes that people can see the whole picture, when in reality we are only privy to a small part, and many times we are totally oblivious to the spiritual realm.*

Job 11:1–6 (NKJV)

¹Then Zophar the Naamathite answered and said:

²“Should not the multitude of words be answered? And should a man full of talk be vindicated?

³Should your empty talk make men hold their peace? And when you mock, should no one rebuke you?

⁴For you have said, ‘My doctrine is pure, And I am clean in your eyes.’

⁵But oh, that God would speak, And open His lips against you,

⁶That He would show you the secrets of wisdom! For they would double your prudence. Know therefore that God exacts from you Less than your iniquity deserves.

- *Zophar was the last to present his case and argued from the point of view of human merit.*
- *“For you have said, ‘My doctrine is pure, And I am clean in your eyes.’” - Zophar put words in Job’s mouth that he never said. He made it sound as if Job was exalting himself against God and acting self-righteously.*

Job 11:14–15 (NKJV)

¹⁴If iniquity were in your hand, and you put it far away, And would not let wickedness dwell in your tents;

¹⁵Then surely you could lift up your face without spot; Yes, you could be steadfast, and not fear;

- *Zophar was saying, “Job, if you would only make the right decision and repent, then surely God would restore you and you would no longer suffer fear and pain.”*
- *There were three flaws in Job’s three friends’ arguments:*
- *They answered Job without trying to understand the truth of his situation.*

- *Their theology was limited and they were unaware that there were other dimensions to God and His plan that they were unable to even imagine.*
- *They offered simplistic answers and platitudes, not borne of personal experience.*
- *The mark of a true comforter can be found in 2 Corinthians 1:4, to comfort others with the same comfort we have received. This comfort will be borne out of personal experience and heartfelt.*
- *They never sought God to understand Job's problem. In fact they never prayed for him or with him.*
- *While much prayer is found in the book of Job, only Job prayed, addressed God, and cried out to Him.*
- *It never occurred to Job's friends to actually pray!*
- *When someone is going through a difficult time, sometimes the best thing we can do is come alongside them and pray with them and for them, and not try to give pat answers.*
- *"Too much talk makes one's faith weak."*
- *If we don't know what to say then don't say anything.*
- *As Job was suffering in anguish and the target of his friends' attacks, he made a number of statements, some rash and some profound.*

Job 19:25–27 (NKJV)

²⁵For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth;
²⁶And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God,
²⁷Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

- *Job had a prophetic insight into the incarnation of Jesus Christ and also of his own resurrection.*

Job 9:4–10 (NKJV)

⁴God is wise in heart and mighty in strength. Who has hardened himself against Him and prospered?

- *Job made a number of statements throughout his discourses about the greatness and the perfection of God.*

Job 9:20–21 (NKJV)

²⁰Though I were righteous, my own mouth would condemn me; Though I were blameless, it would prove me perverse.

²¹"I am blameless, yet I do not know myself; I despise my life.

- *However, Job remained stuck in a dilemma; although he was blameless (he knows of no unrepented sin), he recognized that no person is truly sinless.*

Job 10:8–9 (NKJV)

⁸“Your hands have made me and fashioned me, An intricate unity; Yet You would destroy me.

⁹Remember, I pray, that You have made me like clay. And will You turn me into dust again?

- *Job was baffled and his complaint to God was, “What can I do? What recourse do I have? How can I change myself so that You will stop afflicting and punishing me?”*
- *On one hand Job fully acknowledged God’s greatness and the perfection of His power and His ways. On the other hand he perceived that God had treated him unjustly.*
- *The dilemma is that Job and his three friends believed that God was behind Job’s suffering, and that suffering only afflicts the unrighteous.*
- *Therefore, Job’s three friends concluded that Job was at fault although they could find no sin in his life.*

Job 27:2 (NKJV)

²“As God lives, who has taken away my justice, And the Almighty, who has made my soul bitter,

- *Job, who once held the same theology as his three friends, knew that he had no hidden sin, and concluded that the fault must lie with God.*

Job 27:5–6 (NKJV)

⁵Far be it from me That I should say you are right; Till I die I will not put away my integrity from me.

⁶My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; My heart shall not reproach me as long as I live.

- *Job was essentially saying, “I can’t pretend I have sinned, because I would be lying. I haven’t done anything wrong to warrant God bringing these calamities upon me.”*

Job 19:11 (NKJV)

¹¹He has also kindled His wrath against me, And He counts me as one of His enemies.

- *Job thought God regarded him as an enemy to be crushed, but in reality God had the highest esteem for Job.*

Job 21:7–11 (NKJV)

⁷Why do the wicked live and become old, Yes, become mighty in power?

⁸Their descendants are established with them in their sight, And their offspring before their eyes.

⁹Their houses are safe from fear, Neither is the rod of God upon them.

¹⁰Their bull breeds without failure; Their cow calves without miscarriage.

¹¹They send forth their little ones like a flock, And their children dance.

- *Job then went on to say something that is shocking and frightening—even to him.*
- *As Job looked at the world around him with honest eyes, he saw something he hadn't wanted to see before, because it went contrary to his theology.*
- *He said that not only are the righteous suffering, but God does not punish the wicked, but allows many of them to live prosperous and comfortable lives.*
- *The fact that many wicked people live their entire lives without trouble and without being punished for their evil works contradict his friends' theology, a theology he once held.*
- *The problem for Job and his three friends is that they couldn't see the whole picture, only a snapshot taken in the light of a fleeting moment in time.*

Psalms 73:12–13 (NKJV)

¹²Behold, these are the ungodly, Who are always at ease; They increase in riches.

¹³Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, And washed my hands in innocence.

- *The psalmist was struggling with the same problem as Job regarding why God allows the wicked to prosper. He even questions, "What is the point of living a holy life before God?"*

Psalm 73:16–17 (NKJV)

¹⁶When I thought how to understand this, It was too painful for me—

¹⁷Until I went into the sanctuary of God; Then I understood their end.

- *However, when the psalmist entered into the presence of God, God revealed to him the big picture and the ultimate end of the ungodly.*
- *There are at least two reasons God does not immediately bring His judgment upon the ungodly.*
- *First, God is longsuffering, not willing that any should perish, but desires to give everyone an opportunity to repent. (2 Peter 3:19).*
- *Second, for those who do not respond to God's goodness, which was meant to bring them to repentance, their hearts are hardened in preparation for the final judgment.*
- *However, at this point in the Book of Job, Job was unaware of why God did not immediately bring judgment on the ungodly.*

Job 30:20–21 (NKJV)

²⁰“I cry out to You, but You do not answer me; I stand up, and You regard me.

²¹But You have become cruel to me; With the strength of Your hand You oppose me.

- *Job went even further. He accused God of not only being unjust to Him, but being cruel.*

Job 21:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? And what profit do we have if we pray to Him?’

- *Then Job said that there was no benefit to be gained by serving God.*
- *Job went on to say that there was no purpose in living a holy life before God, since it is the ungodly who prosper!*
- *Job was trying to untangle the riddle of life confronting him and he wasn't doing very well.*
- *Why does God allow the innocent to suffer?*
- *Why is God silent when I need Him most?*
- *What is God's purpose for my pain and loss?*
- *Is there a purpose for my pain and suffering?*

- *When the answer to the riddle of Job's suffering seemed to have hit a dead end, another person emerged on the scene, Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite.*
- *Job and his three friends had exhausted their ability and theology to understand what was happening, but then Elihu came into the picture, bringing another element they had not considered.*
- *The Book of Job is not only an historic event, but also may be seen as a prophetic analogy which can provide insights into the internal turmoil that people experience when going through the valley of weeping—painful trials and sufferings.*
- *Job could represent the soul of a person.*
- *Job's three friends could represent our three directive faculties of will, intellect, and emotions which the enemy of our soul can use to intensify and even torment us as we go through times of what may appear as senseless suffering.*
- *Eliphaz argued from the point of view of human experience and could represent our emotions.*
- *Bildad argued from the point of view of human tradition and could represent our intellect.*
- *Zophar argued from the point of view of human merit and could represent our will.*
- *So if Job represents the soul of a suffering person and his three friends our will, intellect and emotions, what does Elihu represent?*

Job 32:6 (NKJV)

⁶So Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, answered and said: "I am young in years, and you are very old; Therefore I was afraid, And dared not declare my opinion to you.

- *Job and his three friends are described as "very old" while Elihu refers to himself as "young in years."*

- *What came first, our natural man or our reborn spirit? – We were born naturally first and later when we received Christ we were born again.*
- *If Job and his three friends represent the natural man then Elihu represents our reborn spirit—our new man in Christ.*
- *The answer to all our questions does not lie in our natural understanding, but in the spirit.*

Romans 8:6 (NKJV)

⁶For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

- *The carnal mind will never bring the right answers, it will only lead to confusion and discouragement.*
- *When we learn to be spirit led, God will make things clear to us, so we can experience life and peace.*

Psalms 73:16–17 (NKJV)

¹⁶When I thought how to understand this, It was too painful for me—

¹⁷Until I went into the sanctuary of God; Then I understood their end.

- *“Then I understood” - When the psalmist went into the sanctuary of God and communed with God, then everything became clear.*
- *Our reborn spirit is key for us to understand God’s ways.*
- *Next week as we study Elihu’s response we will see that it very much mirrors what God will say when He begins to speak.*