

# Online Grace Bible School

With

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**Online Grace Bible School**  
**Phase 6**  
**Why, Lord? (The Book Of Job)**

**1) The Man From Uz**

No one is exempt from suffering. Our lives are interrupted by it and there's nothing we can do. But why?

- ✓ Hindu - karma. Suffering is reaping the consequences of wrong deeds in a previous life. It is deserved.
- ✓ Buddhist – the cause of suffering is desire. Wanting what I don't have. Therefore, extinguish desire.
- ✓ Muslim – it is the will of Allah. Our duty is to submit to it.
- ✓ Atheist – there is no purpose or reason to suffering. Everything is a chance happening, an accident.

- ✓ An all-powerful God *could* end all evil and suffering
- ✓ A loving God would *want* to end all evil and suffering
- ✓ Yet suffering exists, so there is no God

Or...

- ✓ An all-powerful God exists
- ✓ An all-loving God exists
- ✓ Sufferings exists
- ✓ Therefore, God must have a loving purpose in allowing suffering

- ✓ What is it? One of the greatest stumbling blocks preventing people from believing is suffering.
- ✓ This is the theme of Job. 'Why do *innocent* people suffer?' 'Why do bad things happen to good people?'
- ✓ Job was godly, cited by God as a very spiritual man (Ezek.14:14).
- ✓ When the NT church wanted to know how to handle suffering James referred them to Job (Jas.5:10-11).
- ✓ Job 1:2-3. He was prosperous. Godliness and prosperity do not make us immune from suffering.

✓ **Much of the suffering on earth is caused by what humans do to one another. Is God to blame for this?**

- ✓ Sabeans raided, killed servants and stole herds. Chaldeans raided and stole camels and killed servants.
- ✓ We ask 'Why, God?' But He asks, 'Why, man?'
- ✓ Why did God create a world where people could make destructive choices?
- ✓ Love and free will are inseparably connected. Love cannot exist without freedom.
- ✓ But freedom opens the door to painful decisions.
- ✓ Many use their freedom for self-love which is the root of harm to others.
- ✓ The only way this could be avoided is to create a world without free will, i.e. a world without love.

✓ **What about natural disasters?** Fire from heaven fell and burned sheep and servants. A great wind caused house to collapse killing all children. There are earthquakes, floods, tsunamis, cyclones, typhoons, etc.

- ✓ '*For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope*' (Rom.8:20). Creation was subjected to futility (unable to achieve its original goal). What was the goal?
- ✓ That we would behold the beauty, majesty and splendour of God in creation and worship Him.
- ✓ But we worshiped creation more than the Creator. Any created thing or person we hope in will disappoint at some stage. God reminds us of this by subjecting the world to futility and allowing earthquakes, etc.
- ✓ Even parents allow temporary pain to prevent ultimate pain.

✓ If the presence of evil casts doubt on God's existence, doesn't the presence of good affirm it?

- ✓ Why do we focus on the occasional tragedy and ignore the abundance of God's goodness.
- ✓ What does this reveal? That maybe people are looking for reasons not to believe in God.
- ✓ If a person desires to live in a world without God would He be unjust in granting them their wish? 'Hell is God saying, "All right then, not My will but yours be done."' (C S Lewis).

✓ In the Bible suffering enters only after sin enters. At the end of the Bible there is a new heaven and earth with no sin and no suffering. In between there is sin and suffering throughout.

- ✓ At the cross we see the sinfulness of sin and the greatness of God's love. What God requires He provides.
- ✓ The resurrection is God's pledge that all things will be made new and will never be destroyed again.

## 2) The Devil Is In The Detail

Job 1:6. For much of the Church the answer to suffering is Satan is the cause. But is it that simple?

- ✓ He is not equal to God, but subject to him. His appearance before God is not a privilege but a summons.
- ✓ He is not omnipresent, but localized.
- ✓ Neither is he omniscient. He couldn't see into Job's mind. He thought he knew what was there, but didn't.
  
- ✓ Satan accused him of disinterested service. 'He doesn't love you for who you are but for what he gets'.
- ✓ 'Take away the hedge; let me prove he is a fake.'
- ✓ God allowed Job to be tried, but set the limits. He did this for His own purpose, i.e. that the genuineness of Job's faith might be tested. If Job was a hypocrite, then no one on earth loves God for who He is.
- ✓ So we see Job's suffering was instigated by Satan. But he could not operate outside of God's permission.
- ✓ He goes forth to attack Job. His goal is to get Job to curse God (1:11). He touches, 1) Possessions; 2) Family.
- ✓ Job said: *'The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away'*. Was Job wrong? *'In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong'* (Job1:22).
- ✓ Job blessed, not cursed, God. The loss of family and possessions did not result in the loss of faith.
  
- ✓ Job 2:1-6. But Satan does not admit he was wrong. He asks to change the rules and targets his health.
- ✓ He is afflicted with a distressing skin eruption.
- ✓ 2:9-10. His wife's theology: life must always be pleasant otherwise God has failed us.
- ✓ Job's theology: bad things happen even to good people. Thank Him for the good and trust Him in the bad.
- ✓ If the answer to suffering was just Satan the book would have finished here. But it's only just begun.
- ✓ Satan's motive is to get Job to curse Him. But what is God's?
- ✓ At no stage did God tell Job about the agreement with Satan. Even after the event Job never knew.
- ✓ That is the point of the whole book. Job did not know. Miss this and you miss the key to understanding the message of the book. He was not meant to know. There would have been no place for faith.
- ✓ There are some things that God cannot reveal to us at the moment, and may never, because that very revelation would destroy God's purpose.
  
- ✓ We cannot see into the infinite counsels of God. But there is a loving purpose in the sufferings of the godly, even if we can't see it. *'You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord – that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful'* (Jas.5:11). This is an important aspect of faith.
- ✓ What do we trust in when we don't have revelation of the facts? We must trust in the **character** of God.

### Foundational truths about God to hold onto:

- ✓ God is all-loving. 'This may be bad, but God is good.' He is for you, not against you. If you doubt it look again to the cross. He loves us with an everlasting love. Nothing can separate us from His love.
- ✓ God is all-wise too. He knows what is best. His ways are higher than ours. If we could take the mystery out of life we'd be equal with God.
- ✓ God is all powerful. He has not lost control. God could have prevented it if He wanted. We don't know why He allowed it, but we know that it would not have happened if He didn't allow it, 1 Cor.10:13.
- ✓ He always hears our prayers. He has not, nor ever can forget us, Isa.49:14-16.
- ✓ Everything that happens to us is permitted by God and will be made to work for our good. Do we have to accept it all as good? Is the bad, good? No. But it can be used by God for good.
- ✓ God has a specific plan for us, which is for good, Jer.29:11-14. Job's wife's philosophy was 'Life's meant to be good and if it's not there's no point in living.' The message of this book is that even when life isn't pleasant it can be fulfilling and meaningful. The book of Job teaches us that there is a purpose to all we go through – good and bad. *'My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing'* (James 1:3-4). *'You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord – that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful'* (Jas.5:11).

**3) How To Be A Miserable Comforter**

Job can't understand what is happening and wishes for death. What's the point of a life that is so miserable?

How can you help someone who is in intense pain and despair?

- ✓ Job 2:11-13. When Job's friends heard of his adversity they came to mourn with him and comfort him.
- ✓ They sat in silence for seven days. This is the best thing they did.
- ✓ But they tried to be counsellors. They came to console him but ended up condemning him.
- ✓ Their theology is only the guilty suffer. They have no theology for the innocent suffering.

**Round 1.** They all come with the same answer for suffering, but they approach it in different ways.

- ✓ **Eliphaz the Eloquent** begins with sympathy for Job, but his true philosophy soon comes out in 4:6-8.
- ✓ God is like a tax man. He balances the books at the end of the year. Whatever we have sown throughout the year we will reap at the end of the year. If we are suffering now it is because we have sinned.
- ✓ He based his counsel on general observation (4:8; 5:3,27) and secret vision (4:12-16).
- ✓ He appeals to Job to respond with repentance (5:17f). Then he will be healed (5:19-27; 22:22-30).
- ✓ **Bildad the Brutal** is a legalist. He feels God has been slandered and rushes in to defend Him.
- ✓ He even suggests Job's children were taken because they sinned (8:3-4).
- ✓ He appeals to Job to repent and bases his argument upon tradition (8:8).
- ✓ Many generations support his doctrine. God is always just and fair; people always get what they deserve.
- ✓ **Zophar the Zealous** is a dogmatist. He is assertive. 'Know this...' (11:6; 20:4).
- ✓ In the first round all three argue that God always prospers the righteous and punishes the wicked.
- ✓ Job replies, 'I am righteous, yet I'm suffering.'

**Round 2.**

- ✓ **Eliphaz** is not so courteous now and takes a harder line (15:16). He uses fear manipulation (15:17-35).
- ✓ **Bildad** maintains his position. Only the guilty suffer, therefore Job is guilty.
- ✓ **Zophar** is very forceful once again, and describes the punishment of the wicked.
- ✓ Job changes his view. The wicked do prosper. 'You say that I am suffering because I am wicked, but many wicked prosper and many good people suffer. The ways of God are inexplicable. 21:15-18.
- ✓ In the 2nd round Eliphaz says '*only* the wicked suffer'. Bildad insists, 'The wicked *always* suffer'. Zophar says, 'The seeming prosperity of the wicked is only short-lived'. Life teaches both the wicked and the righteous suffer; the wicked don't always suffer; the prosperity of the wicked is not always short-lived.

**Round 3.**

- ✓ Without evidence **Eliphaz** charges Job with all the typical sins practised by men of position in the East.
- ✓ Job is in agony. He longs to meet with God.
- ✓ **Bildad** just goes over the same old ground.
- ✓ Job gives his final reply in 27-31 protesting his innocence. The third round ends in deadlock. 31:40b.
- ✓ Summary: They are miserable comforters (16:1-2), '*worthless physicians*' (13:4). Their platitudes '*proverbs of ashes*' (13:12). Their theology brought condemnation to Job. He needed an assurance of God's love.
- ✓ Job accuses God of unrighteousness. He doesn't suffer because of his sin but sins because of his suffering.

How can we help someone who has suffered so intensely that they even question God? Gal.6:1.

- 1) Listen, 13:5-6.
- 2) Accept the limitations of human knowledge, 12:2.
- 3) If we haven't been there we can't know, '*In the thought of one who is at ease there is contempt for misfortune...*' (Job 12:5).
- 4) The greatest thing is always love, (Job 6:14; Rom.15:14). Theology alone does not equip people to be counsellors. Our goal in ministry is not to get people to believe in our theology or creed, but to put their trust in God. Love and sympathy are always more effective than judgment.

**4) In Search of a Mediator**

- ✓ Job 19:5-7. Job's friends argued only the wicked suffer. They had no theology for the righteous suffering. Job replied that if that is the case then God has wronged him because he is innocent, yet he is suffering
- ✓ In wanting to vindicate himself and proclaim his innocence, he accused God of being unjust.
- ✓ Another evidence of God's love is that He is willing to be misjudged by those He seeks to bless.
- ✓ Job wants to meet with God but sees no way to get in touch with Him, 23:3-5. He longs for his time with God; if not in this life then in the resurrection 19:25-27. His case is prepared. He is ready, 13:18.
- ✓ He has 2 questions: 1) What are your charges against me? (13:23); 2) Why have you been silent? (13:24).
  
- ✓ 9:32-33. Job asks for a mediator and Elihu offers himself. He waited a long time for the others to finish.
- ✓ He was angry at them because they forced Job into blaming God by their accusations, without evidence.
- ✓ He listened, 32:11. He will represent both Job and God, 33:6.
- ✓ He points out that Job's sin was that he was willing to justify himself and judge God as being wrong, 32:2.
- ✓ In doing so Job made himself greater than God, 33:12.
- ✓ 33:15-16. Job wants to know why God doesn't speak to him. Elihu says He does speak, but not always when and how we want. E.g. God sometimes speaks in dreams. 33:19-22. God also speaks through pain.
- ✓ We are not always ready to hear what He wants to say to us. We want Him to say what we want to hear.
- ✓ Job's theology taught him that God would always reward righteous living by making life good.
- ✓ When Elihu said that He is greater and His ways are higher, this includes His definition of what is good?
- ✓ We reason, 'If I want something it has to be good for me. If God doesn't agree then He's wrong. Anything that brings pain is not good. God's will is what's best for Him, not me. Only I can say what's good for me.'
  
- ✓ Is it possible that our good could really be bad, and our bad can be really good? If so then what we consider good, may actually be good when it is taken away from us.
- ✓ For example, Joseph begins life as his father's favorite. We say, 'Oh! That's good!' No, that's bad.
- ✓ His brothers are jealous and sell him to Ishmaelites, who sell him as a slave. 'Oh, that's bad.' No, it's good.
- ✓ A high government official buys Joseph off the auction block and is so impressed with his management skills that he makes him his right-hand man. 'Oh, that's good.' No, that's bad.
- ✓ His wife falsely accuses him of sexual harassment and he lands in prison. 'Oh, that's bad.' No, that's good.
- ✓ He is promoted in prison, and in the course of his duties he interprets a dream for Pharaoh's butler, who promises to put in a good word for the innocent Joseph. 'Oh, that's good.' No, that's bad.
- ✓ The butler forgets his promise. 'Oh, that's bad. 'No, that's good.
- ✓ Two years later Pharaoh has a dream and needs an interpreter. The butler remembers Joseph. Oh, that's good!
  
- ✓ Elihu pointed out that God may allow suffering for good reasons. There can be several reasons for suffering, so he will not be dogmatic.
- ✓ His friends thought Job's suffering was punitive; Elihu sees it as educational.
- ✓ He appeals to Job to submit to it, not for specific sin, but for the purpose God has allowed it.
- ✓ Whilst the 3 friends appeal to Job to own up to wrong behaviour in the past, Elihu appeals to him to repent of a wrong attitude in the present.
  
- ✓ Job 33:23-25. When suffering is interpreted through a mediator who God supplies it is beneficial, healing, restoring; almost like a regeneration experience.
- ✓ 10:4-5. Job asks, 'Do you know what it is like being a man?' Without realizing it he was speaking on behalf of all of us.
- ✓ There is a terrible gulf between God and man that needs to be breached. God has done this through Jesus Christ (the God-man). God takes our place, lives as we live, suffers as we do, and feels as we feel.
- ✓ It is not enough for God to know about our suffering. He must feel it (Heb.2:10-11, 17-18 .4:15-16).

**5) Out Of The Whirlwind**

- ✓ Job 38:1. We reach the climax of the book. God speaks out of the whirlwind.
- ✓ 38:4. What does Job know of His creative ways? Where was he when God brought the world into being?
- ✓ God laid the foundations of the earth. No human instructed Him how to do it.
- ✓ If we accept this without understanding it why can't we trust God when we don't understand suffering?
- ✓ 38:8. What about the seas? What about the way they are controlled?
- ✓ Can we explain the realms beyond death? 38:17.
- ✓ How is light produced? What are the mysteries of snow and hail?
- ✓ What about the sun, the rain? Who takes care of the desert? Who brings the rain to the desert?
- ✓ What about the atmospheric heavens? And stellar skies?
- ✓ These are hard questions for Job. They are ABC's for God.
- ✓ 38:39-41. How would we cope if God gave us the responsibility of feeding the animal world?
- ✓ 39:1-4. What about overseeing them when they give birth to their young?
  
- ✓ 40:1-2. God asks, 'Do you really want to contend with me?' C S Lewis said that to argue with God is to argue with the very power that makes it possible to argue.
- ✓ 40:3-5. Job doesn't say, 'I understand', but 'I repent'. 'I did have a case prepared for you, but I think I'll forget it!' But he still hasn't seen what his real problem is. He has only been silenced, not persuaded.
- ✓ God doesn't want us just to lay down our case, to shut up; He wants us to trust Him. 40:6-7.
- ✓ 40:11-14. God asks, 'Can you run earth with proud man strutting around the way he does?'
- ✓ In fact man does not have the power to tame two of God's creation. The behemoth and crocodile.
- ✓ If you don't understand the God of nature, how will you understand the nature of God?
- ✓ In creation we would not have acted as God did, because God's ways are much higher.
- ✓ If Job can trust God for creation without understanding it, he should be able to trust God with his life too.

Job had two questions:

- ✓ **1) Why?** Inhumanity. Natural disasters. Satan. Sin. Injustice. Why? The greatest injustice was when Jesus was on the cross. God has a purpose. Only He knows it. He is not obligated to explain it.
- ✓ God allows suffering for the benefit of the sufferer. The benefits that build character are more important than those that bring prosperity. God didn't explain why Job had suffered. He just revealed Himself (42:5)
  
- ✓ **2) When?** Why is there a delay in God's justice?
- ✓ Why doesn't He operate on a system of immediate justice? If reward and punishment were immediate the motivation for doing the right and shunning the wrong would be mercenary and selfish.
- ✓ Divine delays are important to the growth of faith. There could be no moral universe under any other system. God wants voluntary, not coerced love. Love that is coerced by immediate penalty for sin is not love at all. Likewise, there would be no moral universe if righteousness was immediately rewarded.
- ✓ 42:7-9. Job's friends thought they represented God but were charged with defaming Him. Their theology insisted that a right relationship with God exempted one from suffering. They distorted the image of God.
- ✓ Some Christians misrepresent God in both these ways: 1) Showing Him to be angry with those who do wrong; 2) Instantly rewarding the righteous with prosperity.
- ✓ Job, who voiced his doubts, was justified. Though he was wrong about some things, he was honest.
- ✓ Those who believe strongly in God may be tried by things they cannot understand. Though they experience doubts it comes from their deep faith that is being tested.
- ✓ **42:10.** When Job prayed for his friends God healed and restored him and reversed his captivity.
- ✓ God wants us to be restored to those we have offended or who have offended us.
- ✓ God doubled everything he had, including his children. Jemimah means dove, peace. Keziah means cassia, a beautiful fragrance. Keren-Happuch means the horn of adornment, i.e. outward adornment. The fruit of suffering is beauty. *'Tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character'* (Rom.5:3-4).
- ✓ God is prepared to be misjudged. He is willing to be misunderstood in the universe to achieve His purpose