

Faith Under Fire: Lessons from Job

BY PASTOR RODNEY FINCH, SR.



“Why, Lord?”

Have I sinned? What have I done to You, O watcher of men? Why have You set me as Your target, so that I am a burden to myself? Job 7:20

Suffering can be intense. Even the apostle Paul exclaimed in 2 Corinthians 1:8b, “*We were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life.*” That’s quite strong language: despairing of life. There may come a time when you feel like Paul or like Job. You may be there now. It isn’t your pain itself that is causing you to question God; it is the *why* behind the suffering. You may be asking, “Why is this happening, Lord? What is the purpose of this situation?” It may be natural and even okay to ask these questions; Jesus cried out with a similar exclamation from the cross in Matthew 27:46. We must keep in mind, however, that God doesn’t owe us answers. It is by being unwilling to surrender our questions to His sovereign and loving hand that we can eventually be worn down and lose patience with God.

If you insist resolutely on receiving an answer, Satan will see your frustration with God as a cracked-open door of opportunity—and he will open fire. His attack comes with a barrage of negative thoughts and emotions: anxiety, fear, doubt, and discouragement. You eventually question not only why you are suffering, but your very purpose and value. You may wonder, like Job did, if you have become a burden (7:20).

When our *why* questions turn into impatient, soul-wrenching cries, our faith can tip over. We can curse God and turn away, which was the advice of Job’s wife in 2:9. Or we can curse our day of birth, as Job did with a long poem in chapter 3. Or, like Job, we can continue to shriek, “Why, God?” and feverishly demand explanations, as if the Creator Himself owes us the information. But doing so will only make us more discouraged.

Focus on God

What did Job ultimately learn? God is God. He is the Author and Finisher. He knows all things and is in control of all things. No suffering, no pain—regardless of its source or purpose—happens without God’s knowledge or consent. This does not mean He *causes* it directly. But He *allows* it and can “redeem” it, which means “to buy back”—turning something evil around into good. He has a redemptive purpose for and in it all. This is the teaching of Romans 8:28: He works everything for the good of His people, including those things which Satan or other humans mean for evil (as in Genesis 50:20).

When you are suffering, focus on God (Hebrews 12:1-4). Praise Him for who He is and what He has done through Christ’s life, sacrifice, and resurrection. Choose to trust Him more fully, and draw strength from Him in order to persevere—even without the answer to *why*. Turning to friends for accountability in doing so may help; we are called to bear one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2). But be vigilant—their advice could redirect your focus onto the situation or yourself. Their efforts to encourage you might even make you more impatient with God, like Job’s friends’ poor advice did. Keep your eyes on Jesus.

Faith under fire requires you to seek the Lord, not the answers. Like Job, you have an opportunity to turn this season of suffering into a time of increased faith in the One whose love never fails. 🙌

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Why does man suffer on earth?

It’s an age-old question that has been discussed, debated, and disputed through the centuries. I want to suggest four simple answers while focusing on the Book of Job.

- **First, we live in a fallen world inhabited by sinful people and invaded by Satan.** People choose to hurt one another, and the devil roams about intending to steal, kill, and destroy. He wants us to stumble in our Christian walks or even turn away from God. Job 1:6-12 and 2:1-7 tell us that Job’s sufferings were at least partly in this category—resulting from Satan’s schemes.
- **Second, we may suffer as a result of our own decisions and actions (straightforward cause and effect).** Even when we confess and repent, we may face consequences because of our choices. Though Job’s friends were wrong in his particular case, they pointed to the true principle of suffering as a result of sin in 4:7-8 and 11:6.
- **Third, sometimes the Lord allows suffering in order to purify us—prune us—for a special plan He has for us.** Jesus talks about the principle of pruning in John 15:2. Just like the pruning of a fruit tree, the spiritual pruning process is painful—and not pretty. But the results are miraculous: a healthier, more abundant tree that bears bigger, juicier, and more beautiful fruit.
- **Fourth, some suffering—like Job’s—seems to happen without explanation or reason.** But like Job’s suffering, that which *appears* to be reasonless may actually be due to one of the first three answers—or to a combination of them. For example, though Job’s suffering was ultimately due to Satan’s schemes, it was actually prompted by Job’s personal righteousness (Job 1:8; 2:3).