

Dr. John Walton, Job, Session 7 – Podcast

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Welcome back, everybody. We're diving deep today into something we all think about, I bet. The retribution principle.

That whole good things happen to good people thing. Bad things to bad, you know. So we're using the book of Job to kind of guide us.

Fascinating choice. It gets right to the heart of it, you know. Doesn't it? I mean, Job, good guy, right? Yeah, supposed to be.

The model of righteousness. And bam, suffering hits him like a ton of bricks. Why? And everybody wants to know why.

Job included. Makes you wonder, though: is there always a reason? Well, that's where the book gets so interesting. You've got this triangle almost.

God's justice, Job's supposed goodness, and this retribution idea that everyone believes in. Suffering comes along, and suddenly it's all out of whack. How do the people in the book deal with that? That triangle being messed up? Job's friends.

Textbook case, really. Retribution principles, like, they're the Holy Grail. Can't be broken, huh? Nope.

So Job's hurt and must really messed up, right? Uh-huh. That's their logic. Come on, Job.

What'd you do? Exactly. Convinced he's hiding some huge-y sin. They practically guilt-trip him into confessing.

Wow. It's like that belief system is all they have. When Job challenges it, they dig in deeper instead of, you know, actually comforting him.

They're stuck in that corner of the triangle, huh? You got it. Missed the point entirely. No empathy, no real help.

But Job, he's not giving in, is he? Oh, not a chance. Adamant that he's done nothing wrong. This isn't fair, he said.

Powerful. It is. Forces him to question God, though.

If I'm so good, he's basically asking, and this is happening, then what does that say about God up there? Whoa, that's heavy. Right. Shakes the foundation of everything he believes.

Friends on one side, Job on the other, all tugging at this cosmic rope, I guess? Totally. And that tension, the book, makes you sit in it. Uncomfortable, right? No easy answers here.

I guess not. But it's so relatable, isn't it? Even today, bad stuff happens, we're like, what did I do to deserve this? All the time. Or, the flip side, good stuff.

Must have done something right. Like ancient wiring in our brains. Yeah.

It's a human thing, this need for meaning, you know? Especially when things are tough. Retribution principle, it seems simple. But Job shows us, life's not that clean cut.

More complicated, huh? Way more. Speaking of which, there's another guy in the book, Elihu? Oh, yeah. He kind of throws a curveball into this whole retribution thing.

How so? He's like, maybe suffering isn't always about past sins; what if it's preventative? Like a divine nudge in the right direction. Not punishment, but a course correction. You got it.

Suffering could be God's way of refining someone, getting them back on track. Subtle, but big difference. So he can kind of disagree with Job, but not accuse him.

Exactly. More compassion there, for sure. He sees Job's pain, tries to meet him where he's at.

Still, even Elihu doesn't fully nail it. That triangle's still wonky, huh? Yep. Maybe that's the whole point.

Job doesn't give us a solution tied up with a bow. It makes us face the messiness of suffering. And how hard it is to have faith when we don't understand.

Bad stuff happens, even to good people. Deal with it. Is that it? Well, not quite.

But it's definitely saying those simple explanations we want often fall short. Job really throws a wrench in the works, doesn't it? For those simple ideas about reward and punishment from God. Totally.

That's like it's saying, hey, God's bigger than your little boxes, you know? Exactly. But before we go back to those stories about Jesus, I want to go back to something you said earlier, about all the different ways people have tried to explain why suffering exists, even with a good God. Theodicies, right? Yes, theodicies.

You said there were tons of them. Can you give us some examples? Like, how have people wrapped their heads around this throughout history? Oh, absolutely. There's one that's a classic, the free will defense.

It basically says God lets suffering happen because he gave us free will to choose, you know? So if we can really choose to love God, that means we can also choose not to, even if that leads to bad stuff. Makes sense, I guess. Like, God could have made us all robots programmed for good, but that's not real love, right? Exactly, it's a trade-off.

Real love, real relationships, they need that risk of choosing wrong, even if it hurts. Wow, that's deep. What other ones are there? Another big one is the soul-making theodicy.

This one says suffering can actually be good for us, spiritually, I mean. Like, not punishment, but a way to grow. Like, what doesn't kill you? Something like that, yeah.

It pushes us to become better, more loving, more understanding, through the tough stuff. So suffering's not always something to avoid completely. That's the idea.

It can have a purpose, even if it stinks. Doesn't mean we should go looking for pain, of course. Right, right.

But it can be part of the journey, huh? Makes me think of Paul, actually, in the Bible. He talked about how his struggles, even his weaknesses, were like chances for God's power to shine through. Absolutely.

Paul's a great example. He found strength, even joy, in the hard times. But we've got to be careful here.

These theodicies, they're helpful, but they don't explain everything. Right, frameworks, not the whole picture. Exactly.

Got to stay humble, you know? We may never fully get WHY. God lets bad stuff happen. But we can trust he's still good, even when it hurts.

It's more about holding on to faith when things don't make sense than finding the perfect answer, huh? Yeah, I think so. Trusting his character, his love, even in the mystery of it all. Like that verse in Isaiah.

Oh, yeah, about God's thoughts being higher than ours. That's the one. We can't always wrap our minds around it, but he's still there comforting us, giving us strength.

It's about the trust, not always the understanding. But speaking of understanding, what about Jesus? You said he had a different take on suffering. Tell me more.

Oh, for sure. Jesus' whole life- what he taught, how he acted- it's like a whole new way of looking at suffering. He didn't just talk about it.

He lived it, you know, and still stayed connected to God. It's interesting, though. He healed tons of people, right? Performed miracles.

But he never said suffering could always be avoided. It was just going to disappear. Nope.

He didn't shy away from it. No easy solutions. Instead, he met people right in the middle of their pain.

Compassion, healing, hope. That's what he offered. Like in that story about the guy born blind, remember? In John.

The disciples are all, who messed up here? Him, his parents. Like, got to be someone's fault. Classic retribution thinking.

And Jesus shuts it down. Nope. Not about sin here.

This is to show God's power working right through this guy's blindness. Whoa. Shifting the focus entirely.

Right. Look for God's purpose, not who to blame. That's Jesus all over the place.

So sin's real. It has consequences. But suffering isn't always a direct punishment.

There's more to it. Way more. A bigger picture we don't always see.

And that's a huge E-shift in how we think. More compassion, less judgment. It's not just about understanding, though, is it? Jesus didn't just talk.

He acted. Healed. Helped.

Gave hope. Totally. He was all about walking the walk, not just talking the talk.

Love. Compassion. Caring for those who are hurting.

That was his whole thing. So we can't just sit around debating why bad stuff happens. We've got to D.O. something.

Like Jesus. Help. Comfort.

Offer hope. Absolutely. And that leads to another key point.

Jesus didn't see suffering as the enemy. Something to run from. He embraced it.

As part of his mission, even. That's so different from how we usually talk about it, right? Like with the Odysseys, we're trying to explain it away, make it smaller. I know, right? But Jesus, he went straight into the heart of suffering.

His own and everyone else's. He felt it all. And still kept going.

Think about how he was with people who were sick. Grieving. Rejected by everyone else.

He was right there with them. Sharing their pain. Showing them God's love.

And then on the cross, he took on the suffering of the whole world. Exactly. That's where we see how deep his love goes.

He didn't just talk about suffering. He lived it. Died with it.

And then through his resurrection, he overcame it. Powerful. It's like he's saying, suffering is real.

It hurts. But it's not the end. There's hope.

There's healing. There's new life. Wow.

That's perfect. A message that's given people strength for centuries. But even with Jesus' example, the question of suffering is still tough, isn't it? We may never fully get it.

It's okay to not have all the answers, right? That's part of faith, too. I think so. Faith isn't about knowing everything.

It's about trusting God even when we're confused. Embracing the mystery. The things we can't explain.

Faith and doubt. Holding hands. And in that space, maybe that's where we grow the most.

Beautiful. And that brings us to something else Jesus taught. We need each other.

He didn't say go suffer alone. He built a community. People to support each other.

Especially when things are rough. It's not just God and me. It's God and us together.

Exactly. We need that. People to listen, to understand, to help.

Especially when it hurts. Like that verse, carry each other's burdens. Yeah, that's it.

We're not meant to go through this alone. We need each other to remember God's love, even when it's hard to see. Makes me think of all the ways people have coped with suffering throughout history.

Not just the big ideas, but the everyday stuff. Oh, totally. Art, music, writing, prayer, helping others.

All these ways people have found strength and meaning in the midst of pain. It's like this whole tapestry of human resilience. Woven together by our shared experience of suffering.

There's no one right answer, but there's a lot out there that can help. So true. And everyone's journey is different.

What works for one person might not work for another. Gotta find our own way. With God and with each other.

Exactly. And be open to new things. Sometimes the most unexpected things can be the most helpful.

We've talked about a lot today. All those different theodicies, how Jesus approached suffering, and even how to cope when it hits us personally. It's been a lot to think about.

But I think the main thing is, the question of suffering is complicated. No easy answers. But even in the messiness, we found some good stuff, right? More compassion, more understanding, more hope.

Definitely. And most importantly, the reminder that even when we're hurting and confused, God is with us. He offers comfort, strength, and a future full of hope.

It's wild, right? How much we've unpacked about this whole retribution idea. We've gone from, like, ancient scriptures to, you know, everyday struggles, touched on all those fancy theological arguments. Yeah.

And even, like, how people find strength in tough times. Yeah. Personally and, you know, together.

And what gets me is how relevant that Book of Job still is. Thousands of years old, but it's like looking in a mirror, you know, our own doubts, our own struggles when things go wrong. It's timeless, really.

It is. And we started off talking about retribution as this, like, automatic way we think. But as we've been talking, I've realized how often that idea gets blown out of the water.

Oh, absolutely. Stories, movies, even the news, right? Good guys get the short end of the stick. Bad guys seem to win.

All the time. And it forces us to ask the same questions Job was wrestling with. If it's not always fair, if there's not always a reason, then what? What does that say about God, about justice, about why we're even here? Deep stuff, man.

Maybe we don't get the full answer, but asking those questions- that's part of faith, isn't it? It's like holding on to faith and de-doubting at the same time. Embracing the mystery. Maybe that's where we really grow.

Not knowing everything, but learning to live with the questions. Beautifully said. And it brings us back to something we've been dancing around this whole time.

That retribution principle. It's tempting, right? Makes the world seem neat and tidy. But when it comes to real life, to suffering, it just doesn't cut it.

You know, we talked about how Jesus kind of turned that idea on its head. How he wasn't about blaming, but about seeing God's purpose. But there's something else he did that I think fits in here.

Oh, what's that? That whole love and compassion thing, you know? Like, that's the real way to live, especially when people are hurting. Forget about keeping score, about who deserves what. Just love, care, show mercy.

Totally. Like that story, The Good Samaritan. Those religious guys were so busy following the rules, they missed the whole point.

Right. And Jesus is saying being good isn't about being right all the time. It's about loving people, showing grace, even when they don't deserve it.

It's a total 180 from retribution, you know? It's not about what you get; it's about what you give. Love, forgiveness, putting others first. It's like joining God in making things better.

Not by judging, but by healing, offering hope, bringing people together. So well said. And that's something powerful to carry with us, right? As we figure out this whole life and faith thing.

So as we wrap up this deep dive, what's the one thing you hope people take away from all this? I'd say, remember this: the Book of Job, what Jesus taught. It's all pushing us to go deeper than simple answers about suffering. To see God's ways with more compassion, more understanding, more hope.

To accept that sometimes bad stuff just happens to good people, and we may never know why. But even then, even when it hurts and we're confused, God's right there with us. Offering love, grace, and a hope that goes way beyond what we're going through.

It's about trusting Him, even when we don't get it. Beautiful. That's a truth that can carry us through anything.

Thanks for being on this deep dive with us. We hope it's given you something to think about, to wrestle with, to keep exploring. My pleasure.

And remember, this faith journey, it's a marathon, not a sprint. Keep seeking, keep asking those tough questions. And keep trusting in the God who loves you more than you can imagine.