

Dr. John Walton, Job, Session 10 – Podcast

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Welcome back, everybody. We're diving into a story that's, well, it's a bit of a tough one. It's a book of Job.

Yeah. And we're going to be looking at specifically that first scene, you know, the one where God's talking with the challenger, the figure who a lot of translations call Satan. And this scene, I think, it brings up this question that runs through the whole book.

Does Job serve God, you know, for nothing? It's a big question. It is a big question. And to help us unpack it all.

We've got our expert here. Always happy to dive in. So this whole conversation between God and the challenger, it's not just like casual chit-chat, right? Okay.

Absolutely not. It gets right to the heart of this really deep concept, you know, disinterested righteousness. Disinterested righteousness.

Okay. Break that down for me. Basically, it means doing what's right simply because it is right.

No strings attached. Okay. So not because you're expecting some reward or something.

Exactly. And that was pretty radical thinking back then. You think so.

Like, would that have gone against how people usually thought? Oh, yeah. Totally. See, a lot of ancient cultures, you know, they believed in this thing called the retribution principle.

Retribution principle. Okay. I'm intrigued.

It's this idea that good deeds automatically bring good fortune. And bad deeds, well, they lead to bad fortune. So kind of like what goes around comes around.

Yeah. Like a cosmic cause and effect. Do good, get good.

Do bad, get bad. I see.

So if that was how people saw things back then, how does the book of Job challenge that? Well, think about this. God calls on the challenger to give a report on Job. Right.

Right. And Job is supposed to be this righteous guy. Exactly.

And God already knows all about Job, obviously. But it's like a king getting a report from an advisor. Yeah.

Setting the stage, you know? Okay. I'm starting to see where you're going with this. But it's interesting, though, because the challenger, he kind of throws some shade on Job's motives.

He's almost like, sure, Job's righteous. But is it only because he's getting all these blessings? You got it. And that's where the whole retribution principle gets turned on its head.

Because now the question is, is Job really righteous? Or is he just putting on a show for God? It's like Job's on trial in this cosmic courtroom. Yeah. And his righteousness is the evidence.

Precisely. And this trial is about more than just Job. It's about God's whole way of dealing with humanity.

Whoa. Okay, so where does the suffering part come in? Well, that's what happens next. And it's, well, it's pretty brutal.

Yeah. Job's world gets completely shattered. He loses his possessions, his kids, even his health.

It's like everything's ripped away from him. Wow. Just like that.

Yeah. The text really emphasizes how sudden and complete it is. It's meant to shock us, make us question everything.

You know, speak of questioning everything, I've got to bring up this thing about the Hebrew word barak. It means bless. But you were telling me it has this other layer to it.

Oh, yeah. Barak can also mean curse, especially when you're talking about cursing God. Kind of a euphemism.

Well, hold on. That changes things. So the challenger says Job will barak God to his face, but he means curse him.

Exactly. It's this really clever play on words. But then we see Job's initial response to his tragedy, and he actually baraks God-like, praises him, even while going through all this pain.

That is wild. Talk about mixed emotions. But there's another thing that really gets me about this whole scene.

Job has no clue about this conversation between God and the challenger, right? Nope. Not at all. And neither do his friends.

So they're all trying to make sense of Job's suffering without knowing the full story. And we, the readers, are kind of in the same boat. We see this heavenly conversation, but Job and his friends don't.

So it's like the author's deliberately withholding this information, making us feel that same confusion? Exactly. It's a literary technique that forces us to confront these big questions head-on, just like Job does. Okay.

So if Job doesn't know, and his friends don't know, then who's really responsible for what happens to him? But the text makes it clear that God is the one who sets this whole thing in

motion. He starts the conversation with the challenger, and he allows the test to happen. Exactly.

So we're not supposed to see Job as getting punished for something he did wrong. This isn't some morality tale with a simple lesson. Nope.

The Book of Job is asking much bigger questions about God's actions, about divine justice, about the way the world works. Wow. This is already making my head spin.

It's like this first scene is just the tip of the iceberg. It is. And it's not about judging God, but about challenging our own assumptions about how things work up there.

This is fascinating. We're going to need a break to process all of this. We'll be back in a bit to continue this deep dive.

Okay. So we were talking about that hidden information. You know how Job and his friends are totally clueless about that convo between God and the challenger.

Yeah. It really adds this whole other layer to the story, right? Oh, absolutely. I mean, Job's going through all this horrible stuff and he has no idea why.

It's got to be incredibly frustrating. Yeah. And it's in that frustrating, you know, that void of understanding that the real meat of the story comes in.

Like, think about those dialogues Job has with his friends. Oh, yeah. His friends.

They come to comfort him, but they end up making things so much worse. Total Job's comforters. Right.

But their arguments, those are like the classic responses people give when someone's hurting. Like what? Give me some examples. Well, you must have done something to deserve this.

Or God's testing you. There's got to be a reason. Stuff like that.

Ugh. I know those types. It's like they can't handle the idea that bad things just happen sometimes.

It's like they need to fit everything into that retribution principle we were talking about. You know, that idea that if something bad happens to you, you must have screwed up somehow. So they're basically saying Job's suffering is his own fault.

Pretty much. They're clinging to this idea that the world makes sense. Yeah.

You know, that there's a reason for everything. It's like they can't accept that sometimes. Life is just, well, random.

I get that. It's scary to think that bad things can happen for no reason. But if we can't blame Job's suffering on his sin or anything like that, then how do we make sense of it? That's the big question.

Right. And honestly, the book of Job doesn't give us a simple answer. It doesn't.

So what does it do? Well, I think it gives us something better than an answer. It shows us how to grapple with these tough questions in an honest way. How so? Look at Job.

He doesn't just sit back and accept his fate. He argues with God. He laments.

He questions everything. Yeah. He's not afraid to get real with God.

I mean, he's pretty angry at times. And while his friends try to shut him down, you know, tell him to just be quiet and accept things, Job refuses to be silenced. He's like, nope.

I'm not going to pretend everything's OK. I need answers. Exactly.

He keeps searching for truth, even though it's painful. And you know what? I think that's where real faith lies. You mean it's not about having all the answers neatly tied up.

Right. It's about being willing to sit with the tough questions, to wrestle with doubt and confusion even when it hurts. That's powerful.

It reminds me of that saying, like, faith isn't about knowing all the answers. It's about trusting God even when we don't. Exactly.

And trust isn't passive. It's not about blindly accepting everything. Job shows us that we can bring our whole selves to God, our doubts, our anger, everything.

It's OK to not be OK, basically. Yeah, exactly. The book of Job gives us permission to have doubts, to ask those tough questions.

And to not feel bad about it. Right. Because wrestling with God, it's not a sign of weakness.

It's a sign that we're taking our faith seriously, that we're really engaging with it. So in a way, Job's kind of modeling a healthy relationship with God, even though it's messy and full of pain. I'd say so.

He doesn't pretend to have it all figured out. He's raw and honest about his struggles. And even though he doesn't get the answers he wants from his friends, he never stops seeking truth.

That's the key. He doesn't settle for easy answers. Yeah.

He keeps pushing, keeps questioning. It's pretty inspiring, actually. It is.

And I think that's what makes him such a timeless figure, you know? The book of Job isn't about getting a perfect answer to the problem of suffering. Right. It's about something bigger than that.

It's about embracing the mystery of it all and holding on to faith, even when you don't fully understand. It's recognizing that sometimes the questions themselves are more important than any answers we could come up with. I'm really starting to see the book of Job in a new light now.

It's not about neatly solving the problem of suffering. It's about how we learn to live with it, how we keep our faith, even when things are tough. Exactly.

And you know what's really cool? Job, eventually, does get to have a direct encounter with God. He does. Oh, man.

I can't wait to hear about that. Yeah. But it's not what he's expecting at all.

Really? Yeah. How so? Well, we'll get into all that in the final part of our deep dive. Sounds good.

Let's move on and see what happens when Job finally comes face-to-face with the Almighty. So we've been talking about how Job argues with his friends, you know, pushes back against their explanations for his suffering. It feels like the book is setting us up for this big confrontation with the mystery of suffering.

You know, like, why do bad things happen to good people? Yeah. And in a way, it delivers on that. I mean, Job does eventually get to speak directly to God.

He does. Oh, man. I bet that was intense.

It is. But it's not what you might expect. Really? How so? It's not like God swoops down and gives Job a point-by-point explanation for all the bad stuff that's happened.

So what does God do? Well, instead of giving answers, God responds with a whole bunch of questions. Questions? Like, what kind of questions? Questions that really challenge Job's perspective, you know, like, where were you when I created the universe? Do you understand the laws of nature? Stuff like that. Whoa.

Okay. I see what you mean about unexpected. It's like God saying, look, you think you know what's going on, but you're only seeing a tiny piece of the picture.

Yeah. And it's not meant to be a put-down or anything. It's more like God's inviting Job to look beyond his own limited understanding.

To see things from a much bigger perspective. Exactly. God's not trying to shut down Job's questions.

He's trying to expand them. To make Job realize just how much he doesn't know. Right.

And to recognize the awesomeness of creation, the mystery of it all. So it's not about getting answers, but about having the sense of awe, this humility. Yeah.

And it's in that humbling realization, you know, recognizing his own smallness in the grand scheme of things, that Job finds a certain peace. He doesn't get a neat explanation for his suffering, but he comes to accept that God's in control. Even when things seem totally chaotic and unfair.

Exactly. And that acceptance isn't about giving up or becoming passive. Right.

It's not about just saying, oh, well, whatever happens, happens. It's more about trusting that God is working things out, even if we can't see how. That's a tough lesson, but I guess it's a really important one, especially when we're going through those times when life just doesn't make sense.

It is. And, you know, the Book of Job, it doesn't offer any easy solutions. Yeah.

It doesn't tell us how to avoid suffering or make it all go away. But what it does do is it gives us this really powerful model for how to live with suffering. How to hold on to faith, even when everything seems to be falling apart.

Exactly. It teaches us that it's OK to question, to doubt, to even be angry with God. Like those feelings, they don't make us bad people or mean we're not faithful.

Not at all. In fact, the book suggests that wrestling with those feelings is part of what it means to have a mature faith. So what's the main thing you hope people take away from our deep dive into the Book of Job? I think the biggest takeaway is that suffering is a part of life.

Bad things happen to good people. And sometimes there just aren't any easy answers. But we don't have to be crushed by our suffering.

Right. We can choose how we respond to it. Exactly.

We can let it break us, or we can let it refine us, make us stronger, more compassionate. It's about finding meaning even in the midst of pain, you know, recognizing that our suffering doesn't define us. Well said.

And the Book of Job, it reminds us that even in our darkest moments, we're not alone. We can turn to God with all of our questions, our doubts, our anger, everything. Yeah.

Like God can handle it. It's not like we're going to scare God off with our doubts and questions. Exactly.

And it's in that honest dialogue with God, you know, that raw, authentic conversation that we can often find a path towards healing and hope. Man, this has been an amazing discussion. It feels like we've only just scratched the surface of the Book of Job.

It's a book that's been resonating with people for centuries. And it keeps speaking to us today because it deals with those really big questions. Yeah.

Questions about faith, suffering, the meaning of life. Yeah, those are the questions that never really go away. And the Book of Job challenges us to move beyond those simplistic answers.

To embrace the mystery and complexity of it all. Well put. Well, folks, that's our deep dive into the Book of Job for today.

I hope this conversation has given you some food for thought and maybe even a new perspective on this ancient but incredibly relevant text. And remember, even when life

throws you curveballs, keep seeking, keep questioning, keep wrestling with those big ideas. That's what it means to live a life of faith.

Thanks for joining us.