

Tampa Covenant Church

Prayers of Surrender

Job 42:1-6

July 27, 2025

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As you're already aware you've been using the summer to survey the different prayers of Old Testament saints, prayers birthed out of real life situations, and how these prayers ultimately find their resolution and fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus Christ. And as a response to the grace freely given to us, we might become a people marked by prayer.

I realized shortly after picking this passage that it would be an enormous undertaking.

42 chapters filled mostly with dialogue, bookended by narrative, all regarding the predicament of the man Job. Job's prayer as we will see is not isolated or random, but is a response to the pains of his life, and the deep questions that arise out of suffering.

Let's pray as we approach God's word. [slide/black.2]

The book begins with a short biography of Job, followed by a peculiar interaction between God and Satan. Job is described as a man of integrity, one who fears God and turns from evil, one richly blessed, both relationally and financially. Job is described as "the greatest man of all the people of the east."

Yet by the end of chapter 2, Job has lost nearly everything. One commentator describes it like "waves pounding the shore,"¹ a new form of suffering after another. His wealth is stolen. His house collapses and kills his children. His body breaks out in sores. He loses social status. And his wife implores him to curse God and die. Once on top of the world, now pulled down into horrific suffering. Once highly regarded in his community, now despised. He had it all, now he has it naught.

From Job's perspective, he has no idea why this has befallen him. Despite all of this, his mouth yet uttered "The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD."²

¹ Belcher, Richard. *Job: The Mystery of Suffering and God's Sovereignty*

² Job 1:21

But as readers, we are granted access to another viewpoint; God and Satan.

We see that Satan is the one guilty of causing Job's suffering. But Satan's goal is **not simply to cause Job to suffer, but to cause Job to curse God**. "Job only worships you because he is prosperous," Satan says. "But take all that away and he will curse you to your face," says Satan.

God allows Satan to act against Job.

In our finite viewpoint, this is very difficult and seemingly irreconcilable to consider, that God would allow suffering, especially among the righteous. "Why do the good die young?" is the question we often ask, isn't it? Or, "If God is good, if God is **just**, why does he allow us to suffer?"

For Job and his friends, they will attempt to answer this question.

But they come at this with different assumptions.

Tim Mackie of *The Bible Project* writes: [\[slide.3\]](#)

"The friends assume that God orders the world by a principle of retributive justice—if you're wise and honor God, he will reward you with good outcomes, but if you are foolish and dishonor God, he will punish you with harsh circumstances. As the friends witness Job's suffering, they conclude he must be guilty of wrongdoing. Job defends his integrity. While he agrees that bad deeds deserve punishment, he knows he's innocent. So he speculates that God must be punishing him without cause. The friends passionately disagree, insisting that Job must have done something wrong."³

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And Job is right to declare his innocence. It would be a mistake to read his self-defense as mere self-righteousness. He not only sees that bad things happen to good people, but that good things happen to bad people. Job moves to the conclusion that this must be from the hand of God. And if this is the case, then does that mean God is unjust?

But Job knows that God is just, and so this can't be true. This finally leads him to demand an answer from God himself.⁴ Job essentially argues this: "I don't want to suffer without explanation, and I don't want to suffer without vindication."⁵ He wants to know *why* he suffers, because his personal sin didn't cause it. And because his personal sin didn't cause the suffering, he wants to be free of that accusation.

³ Mackie, Tim. *The Bible Project*. <https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-job/>

⁴ Job 23

⁵ Keller, Tim. <https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/my-servant-job/>

God does respond to Job.

The interesting thing about God’s response is that he never directly answers Job’s assertion. He never reveals to Job the reason for his suffering. God spends the bulk of the response talking about how the world works, bombarding Job with questions he doesn’t know the answer to. “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth... who determined its measurements... have you comprehended the expanse of the earth...?”⁶ asks God. One after another, Job is interrogated with questions of the like. And that brings us to our text, where Job responds back to God.

Job is called to absolute surrender.

Job begins his prayer. [slide.5]

“I know that you can do all things. No purpose of yours can be thwarted.”

Of course, theologically this is a recognition of God’s absolute sovereignty and power and knowledge. But this is not simply a theological statement, as much as it is a declaration of surrender.

“I know you can do all things, and that no one can stop you.” You see what he is saying?

“I know you created the universe and have total control of everything,

...but I also know that you can remove this suffering. I know that you could have prevented it! It’s in your power!”

He recognizes, therefore, that he really only has two options: to live in surrender to God’s purposes, or to live in rebellion.

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Tim Keller, in his book *Walking with God Through Pain and Suffering*, referencing the work of sociologist Peter Berger writes this:

“Peter Berger... knows that every culture must provide a way to make sense of suffering for its members. Berger sees in the Bible two basic ways it does that.

In the Old Testament book of Job, we have the most difficult and severe truth about suffering—namely, that in the end we cannot question God. Job calls on God to explain why such sorrows and griefs have come upon him. But in response, [quoting Berger directly] ‘the questioner is radically challenged to his

⁶ Job 38:4, 5, 18.

right to pose the question in the first place.”⁷ And Keller will go on to agree, writing that “The book of Job rightly points to human unworthiness and finitude, and calls for complete surrender to the sovereignty of God.”⁸

[slide/blank.7] And this is because God is God, the only God, who is all powerful, all knowing, who created everything. Just as the meditation text that we read from earlier in Isaiah 55, where God says “my thoughts are not your thoughts, and my ways are not your ways.”

And because we are creatures. We are dependent upon God for our very breath.

We have barely scratched the surface of how the universe works, much less God’s plans.

Or to quote Job himself in chapter 26:

“These are but the outskirts of his ways,
and how small a whisper do we hear of him!
But the thunder of his power who can understand?”⁹

To be clear, what Keller advocates for, and the rest of Scripture, is *not* some stoic response to suffering or injustice. There is absolutely a place for lamenting our pain and grief, and to bring that before God in real dialogue. The Scriptures give us this language. Both Mark and Lou spoke respectively on this.

But Job doesn’t just lament. Rather, he calls into question God’s justice and goodness.

New Testament scholar Richard Belcher writes that “Job has asserted his own innocence at the expense of God’s justice. Job is right that he is innocent because sin is not the cause of his suffering. Job is wrong in his statements that question God’s justice.”¹⁰

And here are some of those statements: [slide.8]

Chapter 9:22-23

‘He destroys both the blameless and the wicked.’

When disaster brings sudden death,

he mocks at the calamity of the innocent.”

⁷ Timothy Keller, *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering* (New York: Dutton, 2013), 119.

⁸ *Ibid*

⁹ Job 26:14

¹⁰ Richard P. Belcher Jr., *Job: The Mystery of Suffering and God’s Sovereignty*, *Focus on the Bible Commentary* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2017), 311–312.

Chapter 10:2-3

“I will say to God, Do not condemn me;
let me know why you contend against me.

Does it seem good to you to oppress,
to despise the work of your hands
and favor the designs of the wicked?

Chapter 16:9

“He has torn me in his wrath and hated me;
he has gnashed his teeth at me;
my adversary sharpens his eyes against me.”

And God himself confronts Job on this very thing in chapter 40:8:

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“Will you even put me in the wrong?

Will you condemn me that you may be in the right?” asks God...

I recognize that in the wake of floods, and abuse, and violence, and wars, that some may be asking questions like this. Or maybe it's a job loss, or the loss of a loved one, or a mental health issue, or an incurable disease, or chronic pain, or financial hardship...

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Job Repents of his inability to surrender.

Job recognizes that he must surrender to the sovereign will of the LORD.

And next he will explain why.

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I like the NLT translation here:

“You asked, ‘Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorance?’”

This is a rhetorical question God asked Job back in 38:2.

“It is I,” responds Job, “and I was talking about things I knew nothing about, things far too wonderful for me.” Job agrees with God, and confesses that he spoke with prejudice.

A few weeks ago our house was plagued with a stomach bug. I felt a bit like Job, and every other parent knows what I’m talking about. As you know, when dealing with the stomach bug, you have to introduce those bland foods first. And I remember my youngest son’s Elio’s frustration that I had to limit what food and how much food I could give him, and he loves to eat. He probably saw me as cruel. But as an 11 month old, he doesn’t understand what I am doing, that although at the moment it seems wrong, it’s ultimately for his good.

It’s that sort of thing, where Job made assertions about God and how God runs the world with very limited knowledge.

Job thought he knew God, you see. And so he built up a case to prove his own innocence at the expense of God’s justice, and he demanded of God what he ought not.

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But now, he sees God. And this leads him to repentance.

He despises his assertions against God. He despises how he spoke out in ignorance. He despises the fact that he elevated himself above God. He recognizes that his place in God’s economy is to trust in God’s purposes over his own assumptions.

And therefore he drops his case altogether. He relents of his demand for an answer and his demand to be vindicated.

In a word, he surrenders to God and the mystery that is his suffering.

He never learns why he suffers.

Yet he is resolved.

He finds resolution in the mystery because he sees God.

He doesn’t need the answers because God is enough for him.

Satan’s lie was, and is, that God in and of himself isn’t enough, that he is only as good as what He can give you. But God was enough for Job.

Belcher again writes: “Job’s response is that he had heard about God, but now he sees God. Job’s deepest longing—to behold his Redeemer with his own eyes—has now come to pass. The fact that Job sees God transforms his perspective.”¹¹

His perspective is transformed when he sees God. And in seeing God, he surrenders.

I love how Meredith Kline puts it -- he writes:

“By this unreserved commitment of himself to his Lord, a commitment made while he was still in his sufferings, not having received either explanation of the mystery of the past or promise for the future, Job shows himself a true covenant servant, ready to serve his God for nothing. The confession therefore marks Job's final "bruising" of Satan, the final vindication of God's redemptive power.”

And his prayer is the beginning of that “unreserved commitment,” that surrender.

And this prayer can serve us well in our respective circumstances.

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Herman Bavinck, dutch theologian writes that:

“Prayer is fitting for us because God is God, because of all his attributes: faithfulness, grace, omnipotence, goodness, and so on. Furthermore, we also depend on him for everything; having nothing from ourselves, we need to receive everything from him. Prayer is therefore deeply grounded in human nature; it is a necessity for its being and exists among all peoples and human beings, even those who curse.”¹² Prayer is essential to our humanity, and postures our hearts in surrender to God.

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Yet if I’m honest, and maybe you’re honest, that in the midst of suffering, whether your own or someone else's, we must contend with “the most difficult and severe truth about suffering—that in the end we cannot question God.” Like Job, we have the tendency to demand of God what we ought not. We have the tendency to call into question God’s justice, to blame Him for our own sufferings or those in the world. I recognize the resistance to pray Job’s prayer in the midst of your own suffering, when you are unsure why God could allow it.

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Bavinck, Herman. *Reformed Ethics*. 467.

Conclusion

Yet there was someone else who prayed a similar prayer, our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ.

He too, surrounded by friends.

He too, sitting in agony.

He too desired the end of His suffering.

And there in that Garden, Jesus prayed this: [slide.15]

“All things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”

Utter surrender.

You see, Jesus knowingly went into suffering obediently. He knew what was about to happen. He knew he would be despised and rejected, tortured and murdered upon the cross.

The all sovereign God, in the person of Jesus Christ willfully, with perfect obedience surrendered to the will of God the Father.

And what is that will of the Father?

“It was the LORD’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer;” as Isaiah writes.¹³

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And by His suffering we are vindicated.

As the Apostle Peter proclaims “21 For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. 22 He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. 24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.”¹⁴

Our hope and strength in the midst of our circumstances, when tempted to blame God, is in the gracious work of Jesus. And by that grace afforded to us, we might become a people that prayerfully surrenders to our Lord.

As we close, here is Keller again, who beautifully sums up the Christian hope.

¹³ Isaiah 53:10

¹⁴ 1 Peter 2:21-24

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“The New Testament comes filled with an unimaginable comfort for those who are trusting in God’s sovereignty. The sovereign God himself has come down into this world and has experienced its darkness. He has personally drunk the cup of its suffering down to the dregs. And he did it not to justify himself but to justify us, that is, to bear the suffering, death, and curse for sin that we have earned. He takes the punishment upon himself so that someday he can return and end all evil without having to condemn and punish us.”¹⁵ [slide/blank.17]

Let’s pray.

¹⁵ Keller. 119