

# If It Is Not He, Who Then Is It?

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[ 0 : 00 ] to give you more. But we are going to look at the scriptures now. We're going to read in the book of Job. We had Phil Copeland a few weeks back was introducing us to this book.

Looked at the first few chapters and we're going to have another few weeks dipping into this story.

And I'm going to read this evening from Job chapter 9, the whole of the chapter.

So perhaps you'd like to turn that up with me. And sort of getting towards the middle of the Bible before the big book of Psalms, you'll find Job. Job chapter 9. And I'm sure Phil will be recapping the story for us.

But Job has terrible calamities happening to him. Then his three friends turn up and sit with him and then begin to speak to him.

And you all know the term Job's comforter. And quite accurately tells us with irony that Job's comforters didn't give him much comfort.

[ 1 : 04 ] Certainly not to begin with. And so some of them have been offering their advice, their comfort to him. And now here in Job chapter 9, Job replies. And Job answered.

And he said, truly I know that it's so. But how can a man be in the right before God? If one wished to contend with him, one could not answer him once in a thousand times.

He is wise in heart and mighty in strength. Who has hardened himself against him and succeeded? He who removes mountains and they know it not.

And he overturns them in his anger. Who shakes the earth out of its place and its pillars tumble. Who commands the sun and it does not rise. Who seals up the stars. Who alone stretched out the heavens.

And trampled the waves or trampled on the back of the sea. Who made the bear and Orion. The Pleiades and the chambers of the south. All these stars. Who does great things beyond searching out.

[ 2 : 08 ] Marvelous things beyond number. Behold, he passes by me and I see him not. He moves on, but I do not perceive him. Behold, he snatches away.

Who can turn him back? Who will say to him, what are you doing? God will not turn back his anger. Beneath him bowed the helpers of Rahab.

How then can I answer him? Choosing my words with him. Though I am in the right, I cannot answer him. I must appeal for mercy to my accuser.

If I summoned him and he answered me. I would not believe he was listening to my voice. For he crushes me with a tempest. And multiplies my wounds without cause.

He will not let me get my breath. But fills me with bitterness. If it's a contest of strength. Behold, he's mighty. If it's a matter of justice.

[ 3 : 10 ] Who can summon him? Though I'm in the right. My own mouth would condemn me. Though I'm blameless. He would prove me perverse. I am blameless.

I regard not myself. I loathe my life. It's all one, therefore I say. He destroys both the blameless and the wicked. And disaster brings sudden death.

He mocks at the calamity of the innocent. The earth is given into the hand of the wicked. He covers the faces of its judges.

If it's not he. Then who is it? My days are swifter than a runner. They flee away. They see no good.

They go by like skiffs of reed. Like an eagle swooping on its prey. If I say I'll forget my complaint. I'll put off my sad face. And be of good cheer. There I become afraid of all my suffering.

[ 4 : 15 ] For I know you will not hold me innocent. I shall be condemned. Why then do I labor in vain? If I wash myself with snow.

And cleanse my hands with lye. Yet you will plunge me into a pit. My own clothes will abhor me. For he is not a man as I am.

That I might answer him. That we should come to trial together. There's no arbiter between us. Who might lay his hand on us both. Let him take his rod away from me.

And let not dread of him terrify me. And then I would speak without fear of him. For I'm not so in myself.

Amen. May God bless to us his word. Well please do have your Bibles open to the book of Job. We'll come to chapter 9 eventually.

[ 5 : 21 ] But we'll be looking at a few different sections of the book this evening. The other day I was channel flicking through my TV.

And I came across a program where a man managed to get hold of an old security safe. A bank safe. On the outside the thing looked worthless. Most of its paint had flaked off.

And it was covered in rust, dents and dirt. But then the man blasted it with explosive. And when the door swung open it revealed what was on the inside.

Solid gold. A great treasure. And I tell you that to illustrate a serious point. The exterior may mask a very different reality inside.

We'll come back to that in just a few moments. Last time we were in the book of Job. It was back at the end of January. And we spent a whole sermon focusing on Job's three friends and their speeches.

[ 6 : 21 ] We dipped into what they said. And we learned that their words that they spoke were full of things that were deeply wrong. Seriously unhelpful for poor Job.

Instead of giving him the wise comfort that he needed. They ended up tormenting him even more.

And he got folly instead of wisdom from them. And tonight I thought it would be helpful to spend our time doing something similar with the speeches of Job.

From chapter 4 to 27 we get eight speeches of Job. Each speech is spoken in response to one of the friends. And if you were to read through all eight of these speeches.

You will begin to see a deeply unimpressive exterior peeled back to reveal what is on the inside.

And what is on the inside of Job is pure gold.

It is the heart of a real believer. A true worshipper of God is revealed in these speeches. Remember that the book of Job begins with a conversation that takes place in the heavenly courtroom.

[ 7 : 28 ] Or if you like the kind of heavenly council chamber. And God is there. And in the drama God as it were he points down to the earth. And he points at a figure on the earth.

And he says to the enemy. To the Satan. Look at that man there. Look at Job. My servant. He is blameless and upright.

He turns away from evil and fears me. In other words he is a real believer. He is a true worshipper. Don't you think? And you know God does the same today.

God might point down at his people and say. Look at Daphne down there. She is a real believer isn't she? Or look at David. He is a real believer. A true worshipper of me. Don't you think? And the Satan says in response.

Oh you think so? Do you? Well I admit that it might look like that a bit on the outside. But I doubt very much that there is real worship happening inside.

[ 8 : 26 ] And God says to Satan in response. Well it's very important that it is publicly seen without doubt. That he or she is a real believer. One who simply loves me simply because I am God.

And not just for the good blessings that I give. So you go on Satan. Take away Daphne. Take away from Daphne the externals. What she values.

And then we'll see what's in her heart. Take away from her some precious relationship. Frustrate some hope. Inflict some pain. And then we'll see publicly whether or not she is a real deal.

Or David. Go to his life. Hit him with some serious loss. Strip away his security. Dentist status. And then the real person will step out. And we'll see publicly whether or not he is a real believer.

And that's the conversation that the book of Job begins with in Job's 1 and 2. And friends it's a big, big truth for us. What is the only sure test by which the world will know who are real worshippers of the true God?

[ 9 : 30 ] And who are just pretending? Answer. Loss and suffering. The only sure test is to strip from worshippers something of value. And then we shall see if they really worship the living God.

And bow down to him simply because he's God. Only when worship comes at a cost may we tell if it's true. Suffering if you like is the explosive that blows open the door to the safe of our hearts. To reveal whether or not there is true treasure in us. The true treasure of a heart of worship. Listen to Christopher Ashe on this very point. He says this.

We see this again and again in church life. Whenever it costs to follow Jesus. A Christian wants to marry a non-Christian. Knowing there will be a union in which at the deepest level they will pull in opposite directions.

It will cost to break the relationship off and worship God wholeheartedly. That is when true worship is revealed. It costs to be an open Christian at school, college, uni or in the office, in the staff room. [10:37] Perhaps a loss of face. Or maybe a loss of prestige or reputation. It's going to cost. And it is when we are willing to count the cost that you and I are seen for what we really are inside.

It is loss that reveals the true worshipper and separates the fair weather Christian from the real deal. Well friends, in Job 4 to 27, as I say, we are going to see a true worshipper revealed.

And I think actually, as we go through the passage tonight, I think there is going to be lots of things that surprise us. There are lots of things that have surprised me. Lots of things that Job has said that have actually shocked me.

For on the outside, Job is going to show us the true hallmarks of a true worshipper living for God as he wrestles in his pain.

On the outside, Job is alone, scratching at his agonized skin. He's sitting on a rubbish dump, remember, outside of the city. He has no status, no livelihood, no family and no hope.

[11:42] And yet we shall see here, despised and rejected, the pure gold of a real believer. And as we look at this believer, let us remember a later believer, a greater believer who came.

Who also hung naked outside a city wall, despised and rejected, and yet precious beyond compare. I've got two points this evening.

Two hallmarks of a real worshipper revealed by suffering. Here's the first one. It is this. A unique pain. A true believer, when they're faced with innocent suffering, will feel a unique pain.

Now I want to explain that there is a pain suffered by the believer that is uniquely sharp. Now you might say, well what do you mean? Suffering is the common experience of the human race, isn't it? All sorts of people get ill.

All sorts of people are touched by war, famine, disaster. Well yes, that's true. And yet, suffering touches the believer with a sharper and uniquely piercing pain.

[12:46] How so? It's not that believers suffer more or worse than anyone else. Believers do not necessarily get more illnesses or suffer worse from natural disasters.

So in what way is the pain of a believer sharper? Well those of you who are readers, you might have heard of this phrase before. It's sometimes called the problem of pain. Where the worshipper truly believes that there is one creator God who made this world.

And that he is God. And that he is sovereign over all things. And the believer believes that he, this God, is in control of this world. And therefore, when suffering comes, it must be God who sends it. After all, he is in control, isn't he? And so when suffering sweeps over the life of us believers, it's not just that it hurts in and of itself, although it does.

Suffering does, doesn't it? Job's suffering in and of itself hurted abominably. But it's more than that for the believer. Because it's the conviction that it is God.

[13:52] My God. Your God. Our God. Who is doing the hurting. We see this pain all over Job's speeches. I want us to dip into his speeches just to a few passages.

So we're doing a bit flicking. I hope you can follow along. But I want you to see and hear and feel Job as he wrestles with this unique pain. Please turn to chapter 6, verse 1.

And here is the beginning of Job's first lament. It's a response to Eliphaz, the speech of the first friend. 6, verse 1.

Job answered and said, Oh, that my vexation were weighed, and all my calamity laid in the balances. For then it would be heavier than the sand of the sea.

Therefore my words have been rash. For the arrows of the Almighty are in me. My spirit drinks their poison.

[14:50] The terrors of God are arrayed against me. Here Job laments that God is like some kind of a terrifying, monstrous warrior archer.

Who is using Job as target practice. And he's firing in these poisonous arrows that have pierced Job. It's a brutal image that he will come back to again and again and again throughout all his speeches.

He says, You cannot understand it.

Because again and again, another thing he will say again and again through these speeches, is he will say, I'm blameless. In other words, I'm not sinlessly perfect.

I know I'm a sinner. But I'm a true believer, a worshipper. I repent of my sin. I turn and plead for the Lord to be merciful. I walk in repentance and faith.

[15:55] I walk in the light. My conscience is clear before the Lord. I'm not guilty of any hidden sin. So why is the Lord doing this to me? The sovereign creator.

Just flick on a chapter to chapter 7, verse 17. And again, this is Job speaking. And he is lamenting to the Lord this time.

That's one of the things Job does in his speeches. He addresses his friends. And then he flips and he always turns to the Lord. 7, verse 17. Job says, What is man that you make so much of him? And that you set your heart on him? Visit him every morning and test him every moment. How long will you not look away from me? Nor leave me alone till I swallow my spit?

If I sin, what do I do to you, you watcher of mankind? Why have you made me your mark again? Why have you made me your target practice?

[16:51] Why have I become a burden to you? Why do you not pardon my transgression and take away my iniquity? For now I shall lie in the earth. You will seek me, but I shall not be.

Just think about Psalm 8. Psalm 8 begins with pretty much an identical verse to verse 17. The psalmist says, What is man that you're mindful of him? And then goes on to express just how wonderful it is to be a human being.

To be made in God's image. To rule over God's earth. Under God. On his behalf. Well here Job, in Job 7, he parodies Psalm 8.

And flips it on his head to a negative thing. He says, Why is it that you make so much of man? Why is it that you make so much of me? Why is it that you insist upon looking at my life through a microscope, God?

Constantly picking up on all the little bits that are wrong. Why are you doing that? Why is it that you continue to make me your target practice? You've pierced me. You've marked me. And what about your grace?

[17:54] Are you punishing me for my transgressions here? Why is there no forgiveness? This is all so unfair, says Job. And later on, you can look this up later on.

Let me just read it to you. In chapter 13, verse 26. Chapter 13, 26. Job says to God, You make me inherit the sins of my youth. In other words, Look, I know that I've done things wrong.

But I've confessed them. I thought they were forgiven. Why do you continue to pick on me like this? This is how he feels. He feels like God is punishing him for sins that he's repented of.

And then please look at chapter 9. The chapter that we read earlier in the service. Look at verse 21. He says, I am blameless.

I have a clear conscience. I regard myself not. I loathe my life now. That is to say, really, let's just forget about me. Forget about it. Because I've had it. And he goes on in verse 22.

[19:00] Let me just say, we're going to get, I think, some of the most boldest verses I've ever read in the Bible of a believer praying. Verse 22. He says, It's all one. That is, all the cases are the same on the earth.

He, that is God, he destroys both the blameless and the wicked. It all appears to be the same to me. God destroys the blameless, believers like me. But he also destroys the wicked.

It's all the same. Just think about that. That is a very serious accusation, isn't it? God destroys both the blameless and the wicked. If that kind of accusation was brought against a judge or a prime minister, and if it was proven to be right, then that prime minister or that judge must resign.

And I think that's what Job is saying here. The God who made this world is behaving very unfairly. He's destroying the blameless and the wicked.

I think he should resign. Does that surprise you? It surprised me that Job would say such a thing. Because at the end of the book, in chapter 42, the Lord looks at Job and says, There is a man who's spoken rightly of me.

[ 20 : 11 ] It's very puzzling. And look how Job goes on in verse 23. He says, When a disaster or an epidemic brings sudden death, God mocks at the despair of the innocent.

Verse 24, When a land falls into the hands of wicked men, God covers the faces of its judges so that there is no justice. It is God who does this.

It is God who sees that there is no justice in the world, says Job. If it is not he, who then is it? Listen to that question. It's very important. Job says, if it is not he, then who is it?

And that is a key question. It's a deeper question than Job may have realized. But you see the sense of it. He's saying, if God is in control and these bad things happen, if it isn't God doing these bad things, then who is it?

Now friends, let me just say, that is a question that we will return to later on in the book. Especially when we get to chapter 41. Because things aren't so simple as Job currently perceives them.

[ 21 : 21 ] There is another whom we know about because we've read chapters 1 and 2. But we'll come back to that in the weeks ahead. But for now, I hope you can hear the painful lament in Job as he's in this hour of darkness.

This section of the book. He says again and again and again. Everything that Job is going through, it feels so deeply unfair to him. And yet he says, surely God is just, isn't he?

He's this perplexed believer who is wrestling honestly with what he's going through and what he knows to be true about God. And friends, this is the added pain for the believer of living in a world of undeserved suffering.

For undeserved suffering is a threat to the moral foundations of the universe. Either God is not in control or he is not fair. And that causes the believer deep and sharp perplexity.

When we looked at the speeches of Job's friends back in January, we saw how Job's friends get around this problem. And how they get around this problem is by something called the dogmatic denial.

[ 22 : 33 ] That is, they said in their speeches, undeserved suffering, it doesn't happen. It just doesn't exist. How do we know? Well, according to the friends, if someone suffers like Job, then they must have deserved it.

One commentator says it like this. It's a circular argument that the friends have clung to at the price of honesty. Their worldview can only be believed if we close our eyes to the reality of the world that we're supposed to be viewing.

Where there are believers with clear consciences, no hidden sin, who trust in God for forgiveness, who walk in the light with him. And yet they suffer terribly.

It's a problem. But friends, it's important for us to notice that it is a problem only for the believer.

When unbelievers say to us that they are troubled by the problem of pain and the unfairness of the suffering world, sorry, unfairness of suffering in the world, we may turn around to them and say, why are you troubled?

I know I should be troubled because I'm a believer, but why should you be? For you do not believe in a living God who is in control or who is good. You don't believe in that. So why should you expect there to be any logic or any fairness or any justice in the world?

[ 23 : 55 ] And yet you do, don't you? I wonder if that is because we are all deeply hardwired to know that the moment we begin to feel this perplexity, we must admit we ought to believe in a living God.

And if we don't feel this pain, then it actually must be questioned whether we really believe at all. Listen to Christopher Ashe.

This is in one of his books on Job. And he gives this quote from a man who survived a concentration camp in World War II. This is the quote. Let me read it to you. And then I'll tell you what Christopher Ashe says about it.

Listen to the quote carefully. This man says this, this survivor. It never occurred to me to question God's doing or lack of doings while I was an inmate of Auschwitz.

I was no less or no more religious because of what the Nazis did to us. It never occurred to me to associate the calamity we were experiencing with God to blame him.

[ 24 : 58 ] My faith was not affected at all. And in response to that quote, Christopher Ashe says, That sounds like a fine example of resilient faith. But actually, according to Job, it's the mark of an unbeliever.

For the real believer who respects the godness of God and his ultimate sovereignty will follow Job and will rail passionately against the injustice of it all and call upon the living God, the sovereign God, to do something.

The real believer, when they face injustice and innocent suffering, they won't sit back passively and say, Well, God is sovereign and just, so I can only say, Que sera, sera, whatever will be, will be. No. The real believer will, like Job, honestly pour out their painful, perplexed questions to the sovereign Lord, praying and asking him to act.

There's much more we could say about this, but that's the first point this evening. That's the first hallmark of a real believer. They feel a unique pain when faced with innocent suffering.

[ 26 : 08 ] We're going to look at the second hallmark of a real believer shortly. But before then, Alan and the musicians are going to come up and is going to sing for us a hymn that is all about the fact that real believers can cry out to the Lord God when they are afflicted and in pain.

God of my life, to you I call. And do follow along the words as they appear on the screen. God of my life, to you I call.

God of my life, to you I call. God of my life, to you I call. God of my life, to you I call. When the great water floods prevail, Leave not my trembling heart to fail.

Friend of the friendless and the faint, Where should I lodge my deep complaint? Where but with you whose open door?

Invites the helpless and the poor. Invites the helpless and the poor.

[ 27 : 39 ] Did sufferers ever with you plead? And you refuse them in their needs? Does not your promised word remain?

That none shall seek your face in vain. Grief such as that I could not bear, Unless you heard and answered prayer.

But our prayer hearing and answering God, Supports me under every load.

Supports me under every load. Bright is my future, O your love.

I have an advocate above. To those whom world admires the most, Have no such privilege to boast.

[ 28 : 47 ] Poor and forgotten I am yet, The living God does not forget. All those are safe and must succeed.

For whom Christ promises to plead. To whom Christ promises to plead.

We should thank the Lord Jesus for giving us so many gifted musicians in this church. Well done, team. Well, Job's speeches teach us of a second hallmark of a true believer.

And it's this. A passionate longing. A passionate longing. When you read through Job's speeches, You will find that he longs and yearns for, With all of his being, To state his case before God in court.

That's his big longing. That is what he wants more than anything else in the world. To seek God's face to face. To meet him face to face. Now you might be thinking, Hang on, Phil.

[ 29 : 55 ] Haven't you read chapter 7 or chapter 10? Because in both of those chapters, Job in his pain and anguish, He turns to the Lord and says, Leave me alone. True.

But it doesn't take long before Job shows what's really on in his heart. And he turns back to the Lord again and again and again. Because he longs for his God. He longs to see God face to face.

As I said earlier, Remember back in chapters 1 and 2, We saw the heavenly council, In which matters of justice in the universe were sorted out. A kind of supreme courtroom, In which all the matters of justice in the universe were sorted out.

And the Lord, The sovereign God, He is like the high court, Supreme high court judge over it all. Lord chief justice.

And back in chapter 5, Eliphaz rather scornfully says to Job, Don't be stupid, Job. You haven't got a chance of making your appeal to that council, That court.

[ 30 : 57 ] Call now if you want. Is there anyone who will answer you? To which of the holy ones will you call? It's pointless, Job. It's futile. You won't get an answer. And Job rightly ignores all of that.

And he comes back again and again through his speeches to say the same thing. He says, What I want more than anything else is to make my appeal to this court. Although the prospect of doing that fills me with terror and scares me stiff, I will keep on crying out to God persistently again and again and again.

And Job's got this tension between his want, But also the terror of if his prayer is actually answered. If he does get an audience with God. Just look at chapter 9 verse 3.

And this is what he's really saying at the start there. He's really desperate to get his day in court. But he says, If one wished to contend with God.

That is, if one got into the heavenly court with God. One could not answer him once in a thousand times. And in verse 4 to 12, Job builds up detail after detail about the majesty of God.

[ 32 : 07 ] Until he builds up a colossal picture of the living God. The immortal, invisible God only wise. The God who is all powerful. The God who towers over all things. No one has ever been able to successfully stand against him.

He is the victorious creator God. The one who moves mountains and overturns them just like that. The God who has the power to shake the foundations of the entire cosmos.

The maker and controller of the stars. The God who does great and marvelous things. So many, but we can't count them. Does Job really think that he stands a chance against this mysterious sovereign creator?

Answer. No chance. Just look at verse 15. Job says, Though I am in the right, I cannot answer him. So Job desperately wants to seek God.

He wants to plead his case before him. But he also knows that he would never win. He is just a tiny, We, Sorry, Finite man. Going up against the infinite creator God. Who is sovereign over everything.

[ 33 : 13 ] Job says, I haven't got a chance. Even though I know I am innocent. I haven't got a chance. Again, It is all so unfair. And in verse 32 to 35. He laments the fact that there is no mediator.

There is no arbiter to see fair play between him and God. Let's just read these verses. 32 onwards. He says, For he, That's God, Is not a man as I am.

That I might answer him. That we should come to trial together. In other words, God and I aren't equals. He's so high and almighty, And I'm so low and weak. There is no arbiter between us.

Or probably it could be translated, Would that there were an arbiter. Oh, That there was a mediator. If only there was a mediator. Who might lay his hand on us both.

Let him take his rod away from me. And let not dread of him terrify me. Then I would speak without fear of him. For I am not so in myself. Job longs for a mediator.

[ 34 : 15 ] He longs for one who will be his representative Before the throne of God above on his behalf. Come back next Sunday evening. And we'll think more about this when we look at chapter 19.

There's another key verse in the book. But the point that Job is making here is that Although he's absolutely terrified at the prospect, He longs to have his day in court with God face to face.

Because he knows he has no other option but to turn to God. There is nowhere else he can go. And this is the mark of a true believer. A true worshipper.

Even when I cannot understand what God is doing, I know that it is God with whom I have to deal with. Because he is God. That is what it is to be a worshipper. To bow down before the one who alone is God.

Even in the depths of his suffering, Job cannot give up and turn away from God. Again and again, he cries out in anger. But also with this passionate longing for God.

[ 35 : 15 ] Because he loves God. Even in his anger. He says, I want to meet God. I want to be right with God. I want to be reconciled with God. I want to be vindicated. To be seen to be right with God.

I can turn nowhere else. Later in chapter 13, Job sums it all up like this. Listen to this. He says, though he slay me, I will hope in him.

He must set his hope in God. For there is no one else he can turn to. And again, listen to what one commentator. He puts it like this. Job says some hard and heated things against God.

He almost says he hates him. And yet it's rather like those scenes in a love drama. There is a troubled relationship. And the girl shouts at her lover, I hate you.

Why do you do this to me? I hate you. And yet we know that deep down she loves him. And she longs for him to prove to her that he is not the hateful man she currently perceives him to be.

[ 36 : 18 ] She longs for him to love her. And Job shouts at God in that spirit. He says, why, why, why are you doing this? Desperately, he longs to meet this terrifying, mysterious God.

The God he does not understand. And yet the God he so deeply needs and so deeply loves. That is what a true worshiper is like.

That is a true worshiper revealed by suffering. Friends, let me close. As we close, let me tie this all together and draw it to a close by saying this.

If we are Christian people, I think we ought to be deeply challenged by this mark of the true believer. Do we as a church, do we have this passionate longing for God?

Do we as individual Christians long urgently and desperately for God? If we do, says the book of Job, we will be a praying church, a church that is a people full of people who want to be honest with God, even when it hurts, especially when it hurts.

[ 37 : 25 ] Job's three comforters would not have bothered to come to the church prayer meeting at all. After all, they would have reasoned it is all being sorted out automatically by God anyway.

Que sera, sera, whatever will be, will be. God's sovereign, he's just. We don't need to do this. But I tell you, Job would have been at the prayer meeting every time back at his local church if there was one in those days.

Just like what Jesus taught in Luke 18, using the image of a widow in an unfair world. She's desperate for justice. What does she do? Well, she goes and she pesters the unjust judge again and again and again and again until finally the unjust judge gives way and gives her justice.

Well, how much more, says Jesus, ought the believer to pray to the judge of all the earth and not give up? And yet Jesus says, he concludes by saying, nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?

If Jesus returns tomorrow, will he find in us that deep longing for God that pours itself out in prayer? Or will he find people like Job's friends, lukewarm, orthodox, respectables, who are going through the motions?

[ 38 : 45 ] It's a challenge. It's a challenge to me. It's a challenge to us all. The key question is, are we true worshippers? Neither knowledge, nor experience, nor music, nor what happens in our meetings will reveal the answer.

But suffering and loss will and how we respond to it. As I say, friends, come back next week when we look further on into Job's speeches at chapter 19 and we see Job growing in confidence and we see hope starting to dawn.

But let's close there and have a moment of quiet and then I will pray for us. Amen. O dear Heavenly Father, you have made us for yourself and our hearts ought to be restless until we find our rest in you.

We pray that you would put in our hearts that same deep longing that Job had in his heart, that deep longing to be face to face with you and to see you, the judge of all the earth, righting wrongs forever and ever.

Forgive us for the times when we've been lukewarm and simply going through the motions. Father, we pray that as a church you will help us all to grow as believers and to keep persistently turning to you at all times.

[ 40 : 23 ] We praise you that you are a God who is big enough as well to take our laments. You are a God who is big enough to take our prayers of protest as long as they come from hearts of faith.

Thank you that you are the God who loves to hear our griefs and sorrows. You are the God who says, come to me. Help us not to forfeit such a privilege but to carry everything to the Lord in prayer.

Thank you that we can. Thank you for your goodness. Even though we don't understand you all the time, Lord, help us to keep trusting you just like Job.

And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.