

Why doesn't God answer?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 March 2026

Preacher: Jonathan de Groot

[0 : 00] Well, you probably remember the high-profile Oscar Pistorius murder trial years ago when the South African athlete shot dead his girlfriend Riva Steenkamp.

! And the judge at trial, she was called Thozozele Masipa. She initially cleared Pistorius of murder and she accepted his defense that he thought an intruder had broken to him.

But as he was subsequently convicted of murder after the appeals court, they had overturned the earlier verdict and they said that he was guilty of murder and he was sent down to jail.

I'm sure you know that. But one thing I didn't realize about murder trials in South Africa was that there was no jury. There was just a judge whose job it was to give the verdict on the accused.

And now as we come to this series in Job and as we've been listening to Job cry out to God, what we've seen is that Job essentially wants to present his case to God.

[1 : 11] He is an innocent sufferer and so he wants God to judge him and to declare him innocent. He doesn't have a defense lawyer. There is no jury.

And Job is on his own and he is pleading his case to God. Now remember, if you know anything about the book of Job or if you've been following us, Job had lost everything, his wealth and his health and his family.

And as a reader, we know why Job suffers. Job doesn't know. Job's friends don't know why he's suffering. Because they aren't aware of these discussions that we read about in chapters 1 and 2. Discussions that took place in the heavenly court between God and Satan, where God allowed Job to suffer, giving Satan permission to cause it.

And so Job's friends thought Job was suffering because he was guilty of sin. That he was being punished for wickedness. And yet all along, Job has claimed his innocence, saying that he has done nothing wrong.

[2 : 16] And so after this long series of speeches that we've looked at, we've now reached the conclusion of Job's speech. So in chapters 29, 30, and 31, this is Job's final speech.

It's the last words he speaks before God answers Job later on in the book. And so if you look at chapter 31, verse 40, we read the words of Job are ended.

They're ended for now until God has his say. And so what Job does here is he essentially sums up his case in three parts. And these are seen in each of the three chapters.

So first of all, he looks back to past blessings in chapter 29. Secondly, he looks around at present sufferings, chapter 30 that we just read. And then thirdly, he looks forward to future vindication.

In chapter 31, he's wanting God to declare him innocent. And as we come near the end, we're going to apply it as we think about where we should look.

[3 : 20] So first of all, let's look at chapter 29. He looks back to past blessings. What's happening here is that Job is reflecting on the life that he used to have.

And so chapter 29, verse 1 to 6, look down. Job continued his discourse. Job is long.

Longing for those days when he didn't suffer. Days when God clearly blessed him. He says that God was his friend. But now for Job and his suffering, it seems like God is his enemy.

And so what Job wants is God. Notice in verse 4, he longs for God's intimate friendship. Now, of course, he enjoyed God's blessings. Who wouldn't?

We would. But what mattered most to Job wasn't enjoying all the blessings that God gave him, but enjoying God himself. That's what was most important for Job.

[4 : 41] And that's a good perspective to have on life, isn't it? Because I guess many of us, if we're Christians, when we're suffering, we long for those former days when God's blessing was upon us.

And we look to them and would love them to come again. But not because we want a closer friendship with God, but simply because we just want his blessings.

But notice that Job longs for God. So he's reflecting on his relationship with God. But also in this chapter, he is reflecting on the relationships he had with other people.

Because we notice that Job was an elder statesman. He was a highly respected leader. Look at verse 7. When I went to the gate of the city and took my seat in the public square.

So when Job took his seat at the city gate, that's the place where business was conducted. Maybe a bit like the city chambers in Glasgow. When Job was there, he was held in high esteem.

[5 : 40] We read in verse 8. The young men saw me and stepped aside. And the old men rose to their feet. The chief men refrained from speaking and covered their mouths with their hands. The voices of the nobles were hushed and their tongues stuck to the roof of their mouths.

So when Job showed up, everybody stopped. People stepped aside, let Job through. People stood up to pay him respect.

Others stopped talking because they wanted to listen to what Job had to say. Everybody spoke well of Job. Verse 11. Whoever heard me spoke well of me. And those who saw me commended me.

Now why was Job so admired and respected? Well, we see that in verse 12 and 13. Because I rescued the poor who cried for help and the fatherless who had none to assist them.

The one who was dying, bless me, I made the widow's heart sing. Notice that Job looked out for the most vulnerable people in society.

[6 : 43] So there are four groups there. Did you notice? There's the poor, the fatherless, the dying, and the widow. And Job didn't just have sympathy for these people. Job rolled up his sleeves and he practically helped them.

He rescued them in their distress and he made them sing for joy. He made their lives better. Verse 14. Job ensured that justice was done for people.

Verse 15. He helped the blind and the disabled. Verse 16. He was a father to the needy and he supported the stranger. Verse 17. He defended victims of injustice.

But he didn't just do this with his words. Job also, verse 17, punished the oppressors himself. Took on the role of the enforcer to ensure justice was done.

Essentially, Job's life reflected the character of the God he worshipped and served. And his life made a positive and a practical difference to the society that he inhabited.

[7 : 43] Now, just imagine the kind of society that we would have or could have if everybody, if every believer lived like this.

Job's words were precious. Verse 21. People listened to me expectantly, waiting in silence for my counsel. Not only did people listen when Job spoke, they waited until Job spoke because of the wise counsel he had to offer.

And after Job spoke, then nothing more needed to be said. That was the end of the discussion, the end of the argument. Verse 22. After I had spoken, they spoke no more.

My words fell gently on their ears. They waited for me as for showers and drank in my words as the spring rain. Job had the last word.

Everybody valued Job's wisdom. And so, just to sum him up, Job loved God. Job clearly loved people. And as a result, people loved Job.

[8 : 46] So, it's no wonder that Job looks back to those great days of God's blessing upon his life. And Job, you know, simply assumed that because of that blessing, because God had blessed him and been so good to him, Job just thought his life would end well.

That would be his reward. So, look at verse 18. Job was expecting this long life without suffering, an enjoyable retirement, and also a peaceful death to end it.

And isn't that what we kind of all really expect? That if we live a good life, if we make wise decisions and the right choices, if we're kind to other people, if we seek to do what God wants us to do, then we'll reap the rewards in our old age.

And that's really the gist of verse 19 and 20. My roots will reach to the water, and the dew will lie all night on my branches. My glory will not fade. The bow will never, will be ever new in my hand.

And Job expected life to end well, and so do we. I guess we still like to imagine we'll be playing 18 holes of golf every week when we're in our 90s.

[10 : 12] We think we'll be running around the garden with our grandchildren, with no aches and pains in our body. We expect we'll be reading a book without needing a 150-watt light bulb behind our head to help us see the texts.

We want to wake up in the morning not having to take about 60 different kinds of pills. Every 15 minutes. We just expect life is going to end well for us.

But what does Job teach us? Well, living a wise life through loving God and loving other people as Job did, and being a respected member of society, a good citizen as Job was, I guess we think, well, that guarantees life will end well for me.

And yet that's not what Job got. And even you and I, we would expect this in a world without undeserved suffering. But that's not how life works, is it?

That's not the world we live in. There is undeserved suffering in our world. That's what Job is teaching us. And even if you're a true believer, there's no guarantee that you or I are immune to suffering.

[11 : 23] And so God's blessing on your life, whether now or whether in the past, does not guarantee that you will not have suffering in the days and months and years ahead.

And that's why Job doesn't just look nostalgically back to the past and God's blessing. He honestly looks at the present and his sufferings.

And so we move on to our second point. He looks back to the past, but he also looks around at present sufferings. Now, Job here is lamenting his life of suffering.

It is very different from what his life used to be like. Just see how he describes the changes. Chapter 30, verse 1. But now. Verse 9. And now.

Verse 16. And now. So there was this, and now it's this. His words actually echo his lament in chapter 3, that bleak passage at the start of the book.

[12 : 23] But here, Job is describing his suffering simply in terms of how he is being treated by others. Because he's not just suffering physically. Because he's not just suffering physically. Clearly, he is suffering emotionally.

And he is suffering psychologically too. And that's really the gist of his words in verse 1 to 15 of chapter 30. There's a shift from the dignity of the past to what is indignity in the present.

So once he was treated with respect and admiration, and now he is mocked and abused. Look at verse 1 and 2. But now they mock me, men younger than I, whose fathers I would have disdained to put with my sheepdogs.

Of what use was the strength of their hands to me, since their vigor had gone from them. It's the youth who are mocking Job. Which in their culture, when the older would be well respected by the younger, it was shocking.

But these young men obviously came from bad families. Job's saying he wouldn't even give their fathers jobs to work with these dogs. They were unemployable. And they were useless.

[13 : 34] Verse 5. They're basically the dregs of society. So he says there in verse 8. A base and nameless brood. They were driven out of the land.

That's how bad they were. And yet Job is regarded as being worse than them. Verse 9. And now those young men mock me in song. I have become a byword among them.

So they even made up songs about Job. And that's when you know that you are really hated by people. When they make up songs about you. Like in a football crowd. Whenever one team has a player and the fans and the opposing team don't like that player.

Then they'll make up a chant to mock them. You remember being at an Aberdeen versus Rangers match. When Ryan Jack, the Rangers player who used to play for Aberdeen. Got a horrible chant said about him.

Basically wanting him dead. And that's never nice, is it? And yet that's what Job is getting. These young lads are mocking him. Chanting songs about Job.

[14 : 41] Treating him as if he is the scum of the earth. And so who does Job put all of this down to? It's not these kids. It's not these young people.

He puts all of this down to God. Verse 11. Now that God has unstrung my bow and afflicted me. They throw off restraint in my presence. So Job's saying, God it's you.

You're the one who's left me in this state. Remember Job's friends? The three of them were saying to Job, Job you are suffering because of your wickedness.

That's why God's punishing you. Well everybody else just seems to have jumped on that bandwagon now. And it's adding insult to injury for Job. They want to trap him.

They want to hurt him. They want to destroy him. As we see in verse 12 to 14. And it just sounds like Job's life cannot get any worse.

[15 : 39] I wonder if you've ever been in that position. Where it just seems like life will not get any worse. Whether it's because of what other people are doing to you and causing you to suffer.

And you just feel as if God doesn't really care. He doesn't really seem to have any answers for what you face and for what you go through.

Look what Job says, verse 15 and 16. Terrors overwhelm me. My dignity is driven away as by the wind. My safety vanishes like a cloud.

And now my life ebbs away. Days of suffering grip me. Have you felt suffering will never end?

God will never speak. That's just how Job feels here. And he feels like his life is slipping away from him. His world had already been turned upside down.

[16 : 37] And isn't that what suffering does to us? We're so overwhelmed that it simply feels our life is just slipping away. And the next thing, big thing that's going to happen to us is that we are simply going to die.

And Job believes God is behind all this suffering. That's why he wants to speak with God. That's why he feels he needs to defend himself.

To plead his case with God alone. To declare his innocence. And so what he does in the middle of these three chapters, 29, 30, and 31, he speaks directly to God.

He cries out to God in verse 20 to 23 of chapter 30. Because he's got nowhere else to go. Nothing else to do. I cry out to you, God, but you do not answer.

I stand up, but you merely look at me. You turn on me ruthlessly. With the might of your hand, you attack me. You snatch me up and drive me before the wind. You toss me about in the storm.

[17 : 44] I know you will bring me down to death. To the place appointed for all the living. He cries to God, but God gives no answer.

He feels alone. He feels attacked. He feels abandoned by God. God is silent as Job just continues to suffer. And so Job can only conclude that God wants to bring him down to death.

That God just wants to kill him. And he is left wondering whether God really cares. And so earlier in his speech, as he defends himself before God in chapter 29, Job speaks of how he treated other people.

He was kind. He treated people with justice. But now in chapter 30, it feels like God's extending none of this to him. God is not treating him in the way he treated other people.

And it just doesn't seem fair. Verse 24. He's saying, God, I've helped other people in their trouble.

[19 : 06] But you're not helping me in mine. And yet despite Job's cries, there is no answer from God. Job can't take it anymore.

His lament is so deep. He even gets his musical instruments out of the cupboard and plays them.

Did you see that? Verse 31. My lyre is turned to mourning and my pipe to the sound of wailing.

Now the lyre and the pipe, they're supposed to be instruments of joy. But Job is playing a dirge just to match the utter despair that he feels. And sadly for us, there will be times like this.

I know many of you have gone through times like this. Maybe even facing suffering like this right now. But this is your season of life. It is a season of suffering.

And you're feeling like Job. Maybe you're even crying out to God. And yet you feel God doesn't answer. Where your past blessings, as great as they have been, have now given way to your present sufferings.

[20 : 12] And that is the tragedy of living in a fallen and broken world. None of us are immune to suffering, even if we seek to live faithful lives to God.

The suffering is real and it is painful. And so how do we cope? If God really cares, then what's his response to us in this world full of suffering?

Well, the end of Job's speech helps us to better understand. So he looks back to past blessings. He looks around at present sufferings. And he looks forward to future vindication.

And this is chapter 31. He pleads his innocence before God. He wants God to look at his life and to judge him accordingly. Because Job's life, you see, bears testimony to his innocence.

And so at the end of his speech, chapter 31, Job basically lays out the evidence in what is his defense case, his defense speech.

[21 : 15] As he pleads with God, he lays out the evidence that he is, as we've been told, blameless and upright. A man who fears God and shuns evil.

And so in his final appeal, Job is essentially saying to God, God, if I've done anything wrong, if I've done anything wrong, then yes, I deserve to be punished.

But God, if I haven't done anything wrong, then I deserve to be vindicated. If I really am innocent, then let me know. And that's his argument.

And so what he does is he essentially catalogues sins that he might have committed. And if he had committed them, he acknowledges, yes, I would deserve God's judgment.

But his point is, he hasn't committed any of them. And that's how he protests his innocence. Of course, Job's not saying that he is perfectly sinless, but he is saying that he has not done anything to warrant punishment.

[22 : 22] And that's why he wants God to hear his case. He wants God to vindicate him. And so he begins, and we're just going to skim through this really quickly. He begins at the beginning of chapter 31 by speaking about the covenant he made.

It's a covenant against evil desire. And so Job says in verse 1, he was innocent of lust. Job took steps to guard against sexual sin.

Verse 5 and 6, Job was innocent of deceit. So Job spoke the truth, and he acted with integrity.

Verse 7 and 8, Job was innocent of covetousness.

Job wasn't willing to let his heart chase after what his eyes saw. Verse 9 to 12, Job was innocent of adultery. He didn't fall into sexual sin.

He knew it was wicked, and so he avoided it. Verse 13 to 15, Job was innocent of injustice to his servants. Job treated his workers fairly because he knew that he was answerable to God.

[23 : 29] Verse 16 to 20, Job was innocent of greed. Notice that he gave generously to those who were in need. Verse 21 to 23, Job was innocent of abusing his power.

Job never used his position of influence against other people. Verse 24 to 28, he was innocent of idolatry. He had great wealth, but he didn't put his trust in his money.

And Job didn't worship other things in place of God. Verse 26 and 27. You see, Job knew what it says there in verse 28.

I go about. Sorry, wrong chapter. 28. These also would be sins to be judged, for I would have been unfaithful to God on high.

Job was innocent of vindictiveness towards his enemies. Verse 29 to 30. He didn't delight in seeing his enemies downfall. Verse 31 and 32.

[24 : 34] He was innocent of being uncaring. Job showed genuine hospitality by welcoming everybody into his home. And verse 33 to 34. Job was innocent of hypocrisy.

Job never pretended to be sinless when he wasn't. And so this is a detailed list of all different kinds of sins. And they're all connected and concerned with behavior.

But many of them are also connected to the heart. And so Job is listing them all to God to essentially claim his innocence. And we might think, Job, you've just gone a bit too far here.

Trying to say you're this innocent before God. And some think Job is going too far. I don't think so. Because Job, you see, is desperate.

And he is well aware that his life is like an open book before God. That God sees and God knows. He can't hide anything from God. And that's why he boldly challenges God to judge him.

[25 : 38] So convinced is he of his innocence. Go to verse 35, 36, and 37. Job is saying, God, here is my case.

And he signs off with his signature. Thereby challenging the Almighty God to answer him. Because if God's got anything on him, if God's got anything to accuse him of, he's saying to God, God, you need to put this in writing and present it to me.

That's how confident Job is of his innocence. Now here's the thing. God will respond to Job and he will answer Job. Just not in the way that Job expects.

And God will ultimately vindicate Job. But not by responding as Job wants. And so he comes to an end. Verse 38 to 40.

If my land cries out against me and all its furrows are wet with tears, if I have devoured its yield without payment or broken the spirit of its tenants, then let briars come up instead of wheat and stinkweed instead of barley.

[27 : 09] The words of Job are ended. Do you know what he's doing? He's calling on his land. His land, the creation, to testify for him. Because the land, the earth has seen all that Job has done.

And so it can bear witness to the covenant that Job made. Remember the start of chapter 31. And so Job's conscience is completely clear because he speaks to the almighty God, the creator of heaven and earth who knows everything.

And so he is confident. He can tell God how he feels. Because God will do right. Okay. Huge chunk of text.

So he looks back to past blessings. He looks around at present sufferings. He looks forward to future vindication. And so just as we apply this to ourselves, where should we look?

Two things. We should look at ourselves and we should look to Christ. First of all, look at ourselves. And we're going to apply this with one clear point of application from each chapter.

[28 : 14] And the first is count your blessings. Isn't that what Job does in chapter 29? He counts his blessings. God had blessed them in many ways. There was the blessing of God's friendship. There was the blessing of health and wealth and family.

There was the blessing of reputation and power and influence, which Job used for the good of other people. And so when it comes to us, we should count all our blessings while we have them.

Because we may not realize how many blessings we have until they're gone. How does the old hymn put it? Count your blessings. Name them one by one. Count your blessings.

See what God has done. We should thank God every day for his goodness towards us. Thank him for your health. Thank him for your family.

Thank him for your home. Thank him for your talents. Thank him for your job. Thank him for your income. For your opportunities. For your sphere of influence. And everything else.

[29 : 17] Thank him. And like Job, use all that God has blessed you with to honor him and to be a blessing to others. Because, you know, if that is the atmosphere in which we live our lives, just that attitude of gratitude to God for his blessings, then it will help us when we suffer.

Because even then, we'll be conscious that we have been, and indeed, we still are, richly blessed by God. We've got life and breath and so much else.

So count your blessings. Second, cry out in your sufferings. In chapter 30, Job cries out to God, lamenting in his suffering. And as he processes the pain, he feels he directs it towards God in prayer.

Because our response to suffering should never be to somehow stoically grin and bear it. Far better to cry out to God. He knows.

He understands. He sees. He hears. He wants us to trust him. How does the old hymn put it? Oh, what peace we often forfeit.

[30 : 30] Oh, what needless pain we bear. All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer. It's a good reminder to cry out to God in our suffering.

And then thirdly, covenantally live for God. What do I mean? Well, remember Job saying at the beginning of chapter 31, I made a covenant with my eyes.

He was determined not to sin with his eyes. He wanted to live faithfully for God in heart and life by avoiding sin.

And so Job shows us what a life lived for God looks like. It requires grace-driven effort and determination to fight against sin.

It requires a commitment to do what is right in the sight of God. So covenantally live for God. It's not just covenantally because it starts with a C, like count and cry.

[31 : 28] But because we need to be committed to God and live in a way that pleases and honors him. How does the old hymn put it? Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.

But how are we supposed to live like this? Especially when we're suffering. Well, there is only one way, and that is to look to Christ. Because that's who the person of Job and who the book of Job is pointing us to.

Job's life foreshadows the life of Jesus Christ. And so while Job was an innocent sufferer, Jesus was the true innocent sufferer.

And while Job lived a life of obedience to God, Jesus lived a perfect life of obedience to God. And do you know why?

Well, he did it for us. Who of us could possibly claim to be innocent of sin? Lust, deceit, covetousness, greed, hypocrisy, or any other sin.

[32 : 38] Which of us could stand before the judge on judgment day and declare ourselves to be innocent? We are guilty as charged, aren't we?

The Bible tells us there is no one righteous, not even one. And that's why we've got no hope before the perfect and righteous judge.

There's nothing that we could do. There's nothing that we could say to vindicate ourselves. And yet the great news of Christianity is that Jesus came to die for us.

To do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Because Jesus was truly innocent. He didn't deserve to die. And yet he gave his life so that our sins are covered by his atoning death.

And so when it comes to the judgment, with faith in Jesus Christ, we are declared righteous. Just as if we had never sinned.

[33 : 41] Innocent before God. Completely vindicated. Because Jesus took our sin on the cross and exchanged it. Swapped it.

Transferred it for his righteousness. That's why Jesus is the true and better Job. So while Job presented his case before God, Jesus Christ is the one who pleads our case before God.

And it's a fantastic thing that he does. That's why we must repent of our sin and believe in Jesus Christ. Because he endured the ultimate suffering on the cross.

So that one day he could end all suffering without ending us. So we must look to Jesus Christ. He alone is our hope in life and in death.

Let's pray.