

What's the point of counselling?

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[0 : 00] Well, please turn in your Bibles to Job chapter 9. This afternoon we're on to our third message on the Bible book of Job. And it is a big book. And so today we're going to look at chapters 4 to 14, which is a huge chunk in our Bibles. But don't worry, the message won't go on until 8 p.m. this evening.

And I'll tell you why we're reading such a big chunk when we get to the message. But if you want to turn to page 511, you'll find it really helpful this afternoon to have the Bible open in front of you. And whilst we're looking at chapter 4 to 14, I'm going to read chapter 9, which is right in the middle. Okay, this is the word of God.

He moves mountains without their knowing it and overturns them in his anger. He shakes the earth from its place and makes its pillars tremble. He speaks to the sun and it does not shine. He seals off the light of the stars. He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea. He is the maker of the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the constellations of the south. He performs wonders that cannot be fathomed, miracles that cannot be counted.

[1 : 46] When he passes me, I cannot see him. When he goes by, I cannot perceive him. If he snatches away, who can stop him? Who can say to him, what are you doing?

God does not restrain his anger, even the cohorts of Rehab covered at his feet. How then can I dispute with him? How can I find words to argue with him?

Though I were innocent, I could not answer him. I could only plead with my judge for mercy. Even if I summoned him and he responded, I do not believe he would give me a hearing.

He would crush me with a storm and multiply my wounds for no reason. He would not let me catch my breath, but would overwhelm me with misery. If it is a matter of strength, he is mighty.

And if it is a matter of justice, who can challenge him? Even if I were innocent, my mouth would condemn me. If I were blameless, it would pronounce me guilty.

[2 : 52] Although I am blameless, I have no concern for myself. I despise my own life. It is all the same. That is why I say he destroys both the blameless and the wicked.

When a scourge brings sudden death, he mocks the despair of the innocent. When a land falls into the hands of the wicked, he blindfolds its judges. If it is not he, then who is it?

My days are swifter than a runner. They fly away without a glimpse of joy. They skim past like boats of papyrus, like eagles swooping down on their prey.

If I say I will forget my complaint, I will change my expression and smile. I still dread all my sufferings. For I know that you will not hold me innocent.

Since I am already found guilty, why should I struggle in vain? Even if I washed myself with soap and my hands with cleansing powder, you would purge me into a slimy pit so that even my clothes would detest me.

[4 : 03] He is not a mere mortal like me that I might answer him, that we might confront each other in court. If only there were someone to mediate between us, someone to bring us together, someone to remove God's rod from me so that his terror would frighten me no more.

Then I would speak up without fear of him. But as it now stands with me, I cannot. Amen. This is the word of God.

Let's pray and ask for God's help as we look at this passage in Job together. Our God, we thank you for your word.

Your word teaches us the truth about our lives in this world, and it points us to you and to your son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And so whatever our life circumstances and our experience of suffering, we pray that you would help us to learn more of yourself and of your son, that we would find our hope in you.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Okay, if you have your Bible open, do keep it open at chapter 4 through to chapter 14. These days it's said that we live in a therapeutic culture because basically we frame our everyday struggles through a psychological lens, where over the last decade or so, the language our culture uses to explain our experiences in life has changed, where words have moved really outside of the medical consulting room, and they've moved into the streets because more and more people go to therapy, more and more people seek counseling, and so there is a different kind of language about how we talk about our struggles in life.

[5 : 51] Dr. Jonathan Shedler, who's a psychologist at the University of California, said, What we've got now is this kind of pop psychology language of cliches, abstract concepts, and turns of phrase that are so different from speaking from the heart.

Now whether it is today in our world or whether it's in Job's day, speaking from the heart and expressing how we are feeling is a good thing. And yet the reality is sometimes words can actually be more harmful than they can be helpful.

And not just psychological language, but even fine-sounding religious language can be dangerous. And that's what we see as we enter into this stage in the book of Job, as Job enters into dialogue, debate, discussion with his friends.

They're debating suffering. And the friends, their words, actually do more harm than good for Job, because basically they talk a whole load of rubbish when it comes to God and suffering.

And so Job really gets this kind of bad, poor, awful counseling from his friends, who are the people who should love him, care for him, and be able to help him.

[7 : 14] Now Job's three friends are called Elipaz, Bildad, and Zophar. And what they do is they try to comfort Job in his suffering, but they fail miserably.

Job actually says to them in chapter 16, verse 2, You are miserable comforters, all of you. That's what they were. And what they do is they basically lecture Job on suffering, as if they know everything, and Job really knows nothing.

And yet as we listen to the friends and their rubbish, the rubbish they spout, we actually learn something about how we should respond to suffering. And so I'd like us this afternoon to look at two basic points.

First of all, lectures on suffering, and then secondly, learning from suffering. And the second point, we'll have a few sub-points, but don't worry about that for now. So first of all, lectures on suffering. As we come to this really long section of speeches, let's just get a handle and a grip on them as a whole. So first of all, the style of the speeches.

[8 : 21] They come in a poetic form. And in chapters 4 to chapter 27, there are three cycles of speeches. So the first cycle is in chapter 4 to 14.

That's where we're looking at today. Second cycle is in chapter 15 to 21. And the third cycle is in 22 to 27. And in each one of these three cycles, the friends speak to Job.

Then Job responds. So for example, the first cycle, Elipaz speaks to Job. Job replies. Then Bildad speaks to Job. Job replies.

And then Zophar speaks to Job. Job replies. It's like three rounds of a heated debate. Until the speeches eventually just peter out. Because the friends, as we'll discover, essentially just keep spouting the same nonsense.

They say the same stuff in similar ways. And that's why we're looking at each cycle as a whole. With the first cycle today, chapter 4 to chapter 14.

[9 : 24] So that's the style of these cycles. Secondly, the substance. When we read the speeches of Job's comforters, we've got to remember, God gives his verdict on what everybody says.

And so just listen to what God says at the end of the book of Job. This is chapter 42, verse 7. After the Lord had said these things to Job, he said to Elipaz the Tenemite, I'm angry with you and your two friends because you have not spoken the truth about me as my servant Job has.

Okay, so two things to note from this. Firstly, God rebukes Job's friends for not speaking what is true. That's why we're not going to spend ages listening to what they say.

Some of their statements are true, as we'll see. But the Lord's executive summary on Job's friends is that they have not spoken the truth.

But secondly, at the end of the book, God commends Job for his speech. Job speaks the truth about God. And yet, as we read Job, we realize that some of Job's statements about God are wrong and Job has to repent.

[10 : 35] And yet, the Lord's executive summary on Job's speeches is that he has spoken what is right. So the friends say some stuff, while being right, overall they're wrong.

And Job says some stuff that's wrong, overall he's right. And that's why we should really tackle these speeches in big chunks. I mean, know that Job's friends get it wrong because of what happens in chapters 1 and 2.

If you were here, you'd remember Job's friends get it wrong because we got a glimpse behind the scenes into the heavenly court of the discussions between God and Satan, and then the decisions that were made, which then resulted in Job's suffering.

God gave Satan permission to allow Job to suffer. But just remember how Job is described in verse 1 of chapter 1, verse 8 of chapter 1, verse 3 of chapter 2.

There is no one on earth like him. He is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. That description of Job's character is fundamental to us understanding the book of Job because it emphasizes to us that Job is an innocent sufferer.

[11 : 52] So in other words, Job is not suffering because he's done something wrong. God tells us he's blameless and upright, so he's done nothing wrong, and yet he is still suffering.

And that's what the friends can't get their heads around. And I reckon today, so many people still can't get their heads around this idea that somebody might suffer innocently despite having done nothing wrong.

And that is kind of a simplistic approach to suffering. But it's the moral framework that both religious and secular people tend to adopt.

And it kind of goes like this, that, well, your blessings in life must be a reward because you've been good or you've been virtuous. That's why life is going well for you.

Therefore, your sufferings in life are a punishment because you've done something wrong. You've been bad. You've committed some sin. That's why you're suffering.

[12 : 53] Or to put the religious spin on it, God rewards you for being good. God makes you suffer for being bad. That's essentially what the friends are saying.

Too simplistic. It's a pat answer to suffering. It is unsatisfactory, and it's wrong. You can't say good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people.

That's not the world we live in, whether in Job's day or in ours. Which means, when it comes to innocent suffering, it seems to make no sense whatsoever. So let's see where Job's comforters go wrong.

So I'm going to glide through chapter 4 to chapter 14. So keep your Bible open in front of you. So first of all, Elipaz speaks chapter 4 and chapter 5. So he's first up to the mic, and he's saying essentially suffering is the result of sin.

And so he begins with this insensitive swipe at Job. But what he says is clear. Chapter 4, verse 7 and 8. Consider now who being innocent has ever perished.

[13 : 57] Where were the upright ever destroyed? As I have observed, those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap it. So Elipaz is saying, it is not possible for an innocent person to suffer.

Job, do you get that? Your suffering, Job, is because of your sin. You've done something wrong. And so, chapter 5, verse 6. Elipaz still.

For hardship does not spring from the soil, nor does trouble sprout from the ground. He's saying, whatever springs up from the ground has been planted there. So if you're experiencing suffering, Job, it is your fault.

You reap what you sow. Simple. So Job, repent. Seek God so he can restore you and bless you again. Chapter 5, verse 8.

He says, but if I were you, I would appeal to God. I would lay my cause before him. Elipaz basically means well, but he's wrong in Job's case. He feels to take into account the fall that the Bible describes to us, where because the world is spoiled by sin, there will always be suffering in this life, even innocent suffering.

[15 : 09] And so it's too mechanical to say, good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people. It's also cruel, isn't it? But Elipaz shows no signs of backing off.

He thinks he's right. Chapter 5, verse 27. We have examined this, and it is true. So hear it and apply it to yourself, he says to Job.

And so what Job does then is he replies, chapter 6 and chapter 7, and Job protests his innocence. Job can't accept this simple, pat, easy answer to his suffering.

So he says, chapter 6, verse 2, If only my anguish could be weighed and all my misery be placed on the scales. It would surely outweigh the sand of the seas.

No wonder my words have been impetuous. The arrows of the Almighty are in me. My spirit drinks in their poison. God's terrors are marshaled against me.

[16:07] Job feels that God is just attacking him with his arrows, and he's thinking it would be better to die than to suffer like this. And so chapter 6, verse 8 and 9.

Oh, that I might have my request, that God would grant what I hope for, that God would be willing to crush me to let loose his hand and cut off my life.

Now remember, Job is a true believer. His suffering is innocent suffering, and his friends are no help. So chapter 6, verse 14, Job says, Anyone who withholds kindness from a friend forsakes the fear of the Almighty.

And verse 21, Now you too have proved to be of no help. You see something dreadful and are afraid. So what Job does is he turns away from his useless friends who are no help, and then he turns towards God in chapter 7.

And see what he says to God. Chapter 7, verse 7. Remember, O God, that my life is but a breath. My eyes will never see happiness again.

[17:16] He's crying out to God, and he's complaining to God in his suffering. Then verse 11, chapter 7. Therefore, I will not keep silent. I will speak out in the anguish of my spirit.

I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. Job's saying, God, leave me alone. For him, it feels like God's picking on him. He says in verse 19, Will you never look away from me, or let me alone, even for an instant?

If I have sinned, what have I done to you? You who see everything we do, why have you made me your target? Have I become a burden to you? Job just can't understand what is happening.

And next, Bildad steps up to the mic. He picks it up in chapter 8. And his point, in summary, is that God is just, and so you get what you deserve.

Job, God is just, and so you get what you deserve. And he is far harsher than Elipaz. So chapter 8, verse 2, he says, How long will you say such things? Your words are a blustering wind.

[18:26] That's really a poetic way of saying, Shut up, Job. Stop blowing hot air. Your words are worthless. And he makes this point, chapter 8, verse 3.

Does God pervert justice? Does the Almighty pervert what is right? So here's the moral framework that Job's three friends have adopted.

They're saying, God never perverts justice. God is just. So it's impossible for him to do anything that is unjust. Which means, because God is just, then you get what you deserve.

What's for you will no go by ye. As he's saying in Glasgow. Whatever is meant to happen to you will happen to you. And so Bildad's saying, deal with it, Job.

That's just how it is. But then he gives this really cruel example, chapter 8, verse 4. When your children sinned against him, he gave them over to the penalty of their sin.

[19:30] And so as Job is mourning the loss of his ten children, Bildad says, Aye, Job, you deserve this, mate. Your kids were guilty of sin.

That's why the house collapsed on them and why they were crushed to death. I don't think Bildad is Glaswegian, by the way. I don't know where that came from. Anyway, this is basically the worst pastoral counseling ever.

But then Bildad applies the logic of it to Job, chapter 8, verse 5. But if you will seek God earnestly and plead with the Almighty, if you are pure and upright, even now he will rouse himself on your behalf and restore you to your prosperous state.

So Job, do business with God and then God will make you prosperous again. Simple. Job, be a good boy and God will bless you. Easy.

And so Bildad claims all of this reasoning, his wisdom, comes from traditional wisdom. Verse 8 to 10. He's saying, Job, if you just look to the past, you'll see it's always been this way.

[20:38] It's a case of simple cause and effect. Everybody knows bad things happen to bad people. That's how Bildad sums it up there in chapter 8, verse 20.

Surely God does not reject one who is blameless or strengthen the hands of evildoers. So he's saying to Job, Job, understand God is just.

So you are getting what you deserve. But Job, what you need to do is repent quickly of what you've done and then God will stop your suffering. So Bildad has no place for innocent suffering in his

moral framework either, does he?

And of course, God is just, as Bildad makes clear. And so God will ultimately condemn the wicked and people will reap what they sow in the end.

But Bildad has got Job's case wrong. And so Job then replies in chapters 9 and 10. And Job wants to present his case to God because he's getting nowhere with his three mates.

[21 : 45] Now, Job doesn't deny that God is just. Chapter 9, on to verse 2. Indeed, I know that this is true, but how can mere mortals prove their innocence before God? So because Job is an innocent sufferer, he wants to present his case to God because he does believe that God is just.

He doesn't deny it. And so Job's issue is that God's sovereign power seems to be working in an unjust way in Job's life.

And it really troubles Job. It seems like God is messing about with the way that his creation should operate. Like bad things happening to a good person like Job doesn't seem to be the way it should be.

And because Job doesn't know why, he wants to vindicate himself before God. And so Job starts talking in legal terms. And we read chapter 9.

And if you look at chapter 9, it fills up with all kinds of legal jargon. And I wonder if you've ever felt the need to take someone to court to prove that you are innocent.

[22 : 53] Because that's how Job is feeling here. See what he says in chapter 9, verse 14. How then can I dispute with him? How can I find words to argue with him?

Though I were innocent, I could not answer him. I could only plead with my judge for mercy. Even if I summoned him and he responded, I do not believe he would give me a hearing.

So Job's aware. There's no way he can possibly plead his case with God on his own. And so he's accusing God here of cruel injustice. Just look at verse 22.

It is all the same. That is why I say he destroys both the blameless and the wicked. Then verse 23. When a scourge brings sudden death, he mocks the despair of the innocent.

But further and deeper than this, Job is saying that God actively causes injustice. Verse 24. When the land falls into the hands of the wicked, he blindfolds its judges.

[23 : 57] If it is not he, then who is it? Now this is clearly wrong. So why is Job saying this? It's because in his suffering, this is how life appears to be for him.

And he is troubled by it. He knows that God is sovereign. He's got control of everything. But Job can't understand.

Because he reckons everything that happens must be because God wants it, whether good or evil. And so if that's true, then God's will is the ultimate cause behind everything that happens.

And yet we know from other parts of the Bible that God is never the author of sin. God is never the author of evil. And so how do you balance that with the fact that God is in control?

Well, God in his wisdom does permit sin, evil, to serve his purposes and to achieve his greater good. And that's what Job is struggling to get his head around.

[25 : 07] And we do too. And so what Job does in chapter 9 is he cries out for an arbiter. Verse 22, sorry, verse 32 and 33.

He is not a mere mortal like me that I might answer him, that we might confront each other in court if only there were someone to mediate between us, someone to bring us together.

So Job knows he's got to deal with God. He knows he can't understand God fully. And so what he longs for is somebody to mediate, to go between him and God and bring them together.

Now, we'll come back to this, but right here, Job feels God is still against him. Yes, God is in charge. So why the suffering for me?

And so look at chapter 10, verse 1 to 3. I loathe my very life. Therefore, I will give free reign to my complaint and speak out in the bitterness of my soul. I say to God, do not declare me guilty, but tell me what charges you have against me.

[26 : 12] Does it please you to oppress me, to spurn the work of your hands while you smile on the plans of the wicked? And then Job goes on, and he's basically saying to God, God, are you sure you can see?

Do you need glasses? Verse 4 and 5. Do you have eyes of flesh? Do you see as a mortal sees?

Are your days like those of a mortal, or your years like those of a strong man?

And because God is his creator, Job is asking in verse 8 of chapter 10, your hands shaped me and made me. Will you now turn and destroy me? He's saying, why did you make me if you're just going

to set me up for all the suffering?

Verse 18. Why then did you bring me out of the womb? I wish I had died before any eye saw me. He's grappling. He's wrestling with God.

He's wrestling with the reality of God's sovereignty, God's control, combined with what appears to be God's injustice at his suffering. And then Zophar finally picks up the mic in chapter 11.

[27 : 25] And he is dogmatic and really very sure of himself. But Zophar basically bangs the same drum. His main point is that Job is not innocent.

So Job must repent. His words are the harshest yet. Look at chapter 11, verse 2 and 3. Are all these words to go unanswered?

Is this talker to be vindicated? Will your idle talk reduce others to silence? Will no one rebuke you when you mock? So Zophar is appalled that Job could claim to be innocent.

Job had been wanting God to answer him. Now Zophar wants God to answer Job because he is convinced God will be against him because of what Job has been saying. And so verse 4 and 5 of chapter 11.

You say to God, my beliefs are flawless and I am pure in your sight. Oh, how I wish that God would speak, that he would open his lips against you and disclose to you the secrets of wisdom.

[28 : 25] For true wisdom has two sides. Know this, God has even forgotten some of your sin. Zophar is even suggesting Job's sufferings are less than he deserves for his sin.

But again, it's not as if Zophar has got it all wrong because he knows God is transcendent and all of God's ways cannot always be worked out. See what he says in verse 7 and 8.

Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty? Are they higher than the heavens above? What can you do? They are deeper than the depths below. What can you know?

Zophar thinks Job must be a secret sinner. He's done something behind the scenes. His friends don't know, but that's why Job is suffering. But Zophar's not really seeing anything different from his friends.

He also gives this cold, mechanical theory of retributive justice where Job is simply getting what he deserves.

[29 : 27] So Job's friends believe Job is suffering because he's done something wrong. And if Job repents of his sin, then God will forgive him and bless him.

Simple, or so the friends think, but they are miserable comforters. And so Job responds and concludes this first cycle of speeches in chapter 12 to 14.

First of all, Job responds to his friends and then Job responds to God. He's completely frustrated by his friends. He's getting nowhere. Chapter 12, verse two, doubtless you're the only people who matter and wisdom will die with you.

You've got to love his sarcasm. He's saying, guys, you're just so wise that when you die, there'll be no wisdom left in the whole world. It will die with you because they're not telling Job anything new. Job knows that God is sovereign. And so in chapter 12, he sings this hymn of praise about God's great power. God's power can't be contained. He's saying God's power is sometimes wild.

[30 : 31] It is often unpredictable. It is not a simple mechanical process as the friends suggest. And that's why Job turns to attack them. Chapter 13, verse one.

My eyes have seen all this. My ears have heard and understand it. What you know, I also know. I'm not inferior to you, but I desire to speak to the Almighty and to argue my case with God.

Job says his friends are liars, verse four. He says they're useless doctors, verse four. And if they want to be wise, Job says in verse five, the best thing you can do is shut your mouth.

That's how you'll be wise because they don't speak for God. Verse seven. Will you speak wickedly on God's behalf? Will you speak deceitfully for him? Job wants to speak with God to prove his innocence.

So Job's life is in God's hands. He's aware of this. And that is his only hope. And it's a hope that goes beyond death. Chapter 14, verse 14.

[31 : 35] If someone dies, will they live again? All the days of my hard service, I will wait for my renewal to come. So Job here longs to be in the very presence of God.

Verse 15 to 17, he's saying he wants to enjoy a relationship with God. He wants to be in communion with God. He wants to be restored and to be forgiven. And so this is Job's confession of faith.

He is clinging on to God in his suffering. He's perplexed as to why, but he won't let God go. And so that's the first and very long point.

Lectures on suffering. And the second point, learning from suffering. I'd just like us to think of three dangers from what the friends are saying. One danger is misjudging suffering.

Another danger is misunderstanding God. And a third danger is misspoken words. So first, misjudging suffering. We know, as the reader, Job is an innocent sufferer.

[32 : 37] But his friends are convinced that Job has committed some sin. He's done something wrong. And so he deserves it. But that's not just too simple. It's wrong. So when an elderly woman in a former congregation of mine in Edinburgh says to me as she suffers terrible pain, lying in her hospital bed, in her old age, she says, have I done something wrong to deserve this?

Job's friends would answer, yes. You've obviously done something wrong at some point in your life, so you're essentially just getting what you deserve. It's not good enough, is it?

Or the flip side is that those who aren't suffering and who are living a good life might be tempted to think, I deserve this. Things are really going well.

I must have been good. I am good. God really likes me more than he likes these other people. It's a bit like Maria in The Sound of Music, that great musical, if you've seen it, that's on at Christmas every year.

Remember Captain Von Trapp? He declares his love for Maria and in her delight, Maria starts to sing. And I'm not going to sing it for you, but these are the words she sings.

[33 : 52] Nothing comes from nothing. Nothing ever could. So somewhere in my youth or childhood, I must have done something good. Nothing comes from nothing. Nothing ever could. So somewhere in my youth or childhood, I must have done something good.

And you want to scream at the TV, no, Maria, no. Don't listen to Job's friends. They are just talking absolute rubbish. Don't be sucked into believing that when you do something good in your life or when something good happens to you, more good will happen.

I mean, I'm not knocking the sound of music. Great movie. Just don't use it to base your theology on. You just can't deduce that because something good has happened to you, then you must have done something good at some point to deserve it.

Because the flip is, of course, when bad things happen to you, then you start to think, oh, I must have done something to deserve this suffering, this evil that is coming upon me. And that is misjudging suffering.

And of course, all suffering is a consequence of the fall, but we can't say that individual suffering or particular suffering for that person or that person or me is a direct result of a particular sin.

[35 : 09] It just doesn't work that way. Jesus says so too. I don't know if you remember in John chapter nine, there's this man who's born blind. And Jesus' disciples see this man born blind from birth.

And so they say to Jesus, Rabbi, who sinned? This man or his parents that he was born blind. What does Jesus say? Neither this man nor his parents sinned.

And then he said this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. So Jesus says the suffering of this man's blindness wasn't the result of his sin.

There's no direct connection. And it's the same with Job and his innocent suffering. So let's not misjudge suffering, whether our own or somebody else's.

Let's never be tempted to think that faithfulness to God means that we deserve a life exempt from suffering. Secondly, misunderstanding God.

[36 : 06] Job's friends clearly misunderstand God. Of course, they do speak plenty orthodox theology. They emphasize God's sovereignty. They emphasize God's justice.

But their application of this theology is wrong and insensitive. So yes, God is just and will punish all sin for sure.

But not in some kind of tit-for-tat way that the friends think. And yet so many people, well, this is the mechanical way that God works. And they misunderstand him.

It's often emphasized in what's called the prosperity gospel, where God's blessing is seen in having a great job, having the perfect spouse, having wonderful children, having a nice house, having a fancy car, having riches and prosperity.

Then God's blessing you. God is pleased with you. You're good. But if you go without, or if you suffer in any way, then God is not blessing you. You must have done something wrong.

[37 : 08] Or you just don't have enough faith. But Job chapter 1 and chapter 2 clearly tell us God was pleased with Job. He says of Job, And he says, There's no one on earth like him.

He is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And yet Job still suffered. There is no doubt God is both sovereign and just.

And so knowing this and grasping this, believing this, should help us make more sense of suffering, not less. And it also gives us more hope in suffering as we trust that God is in control and God always does what is right.

And even if we suffer, it's not outwith God's purpose for our lives, but he's using it for his own greater good. So misjudging suffering, misunderstanding God, and then third, misspoken words. Since Job's friends misjudged his suffering, and since they misunderstood God, then it's hardly surprising that their words are misspoken.

[38 : 25] Because what they do is they condemn Job, rather, and comfort him. They care more about being right than they do care for Job. And so despite saying some true things, they're cold, they're callous, they're miserable comforters.

This week I was reminded of some words by a journalist after the Soham murders. Remember those? Back in 2002, Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman, two 10-year-old girls, were brutally murdered.

And this is what this journalist said in a newspaper article. He said, And yeah, you could argue there's some truth in what he says, but it's not what you say to grieving parents, is it?

Misspoken words are so dangerous when it comes to suffering. And so as we close and wrap this up, Job's friends failed at comforting him.

His only hope of comfort, which he realized, was God himself. And that's why Job just kept praying in all of his perplexity.

[39 : 48] And he wanted someone to arbitrate between him and God. He wanted a mediator. And of course, we know that one day a mediator did come. The one mediator between God and mankind, the man Jesus Christ.

So what Job longed for, but didn't get, we get in Jesus. Because Jesus fully satisfied God's justice on the cross.

He suffered and died, not because he had done anything wrong, but because we have. And so when Elipaz just couldn't conceive of somebody suffering who didn't deserve it, an innocent sufferer, Elipaz actually spoke the truth much better than he knew.

Because when he asked in chapter 4, verse 7, who being innocent has ever perished? The answer is Jesus Christ. Jesus is the truly innocent sufferer who perished on the cross for the guilty so that the guilty may never perish.

We are guilty before God for our sin against him. And we can't plead our case before God's perfect justice because we'd be condemned.

[41 : 08] And yet the good news is we have this mediator in Jesus Christ who lived a life that we could never live in full obedience to God and died the death that we deserve to die for our sin against God.

And so God accepts us. Paul says in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, He's saying everybody who has faith in Jesus Christ has their sins forgiven and is righteous in God's sight.

And so it's only when we know that Jesus Christ has done this for us, he's done it for me, can we find true comfort even in our suffering.