

"Why Did I Not Die At Birth?" (Job 3)

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[0 : 00] Let's open our Bibles to Job 3. I'll be reading the NIV version.

Job speaks. After this, Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. He said, May the day of my birth perish, and the night that said, a boy is conceived.

That day, may it turn to darkness. May God above not care about it. May no light shine on it. May gloom and utter darkness claim it once more.

May a cloud settle over it. May darkness, blackness, overwhelm it. That night, may thick darkness seize it. May it not be included among the days of the year, nor be entered in any of the months.

May that night be barren. May no shout of joy be heard in it. May those who curse days curse that day, those who are ready to rouse Leviathan. May its morning stars become dark.

[1 : 05] May it wait for daylight in vain, and not see the first rays of dawn. May it wait for it to me, for it did not shut the doors of the womb on me, to hide trouble from my eyes.

Why did I not perish at birth, and die as I come from the womb? Why were there knees to receive me, and breasts that I might be nursed? For now I would be lying down in peace.

I would be asleep and at rest with kings and rulers of the earth, who built for themselves places now lying in ruins, with princes who had gold, who filled their houses with silver.

Why was I not hidden away in the ground like a stillborn child, like an infant who never saw the light of day? There the wicked seize from turmoil, and there the weary are at rest.

Captives also enjoy their ease. They no longer hear their slave driver's voice. The small and the great are there, and the slaves are freed from their owners.

[2 : 06] Why is light given to those in misery, and life to the bitter of soul, to those who long for death that does not come, who search for it more than the hidden treasure, who are filled with gladness and rejoice when they reach the grave?

Why is life given to a man whose way is hidden, whom God has hedged in? For sighing has become my daily food, my groans pour out like water. What I feared has come upon me, what I dreaded has happened to me.

I have no peace, no quietness, I have no rest, but only turmoil. Thank you, worship team, and thank you all for being here.

Why don't we pray and hear from God's word as we go deeper into Job chapter 3. Father, we thank you that all scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching and reproof, for correction and training.

And yet we come to passages sometimes, and we wish that they were different. It was a happy ending. In spite of this, we want to trust you, that you have something to say to us right now, from these words from you.

[3 : 41] So be with us as we sit with Job, as he curses, as he cries, as he asks questions of you. Help us to see, even in him, a shadow of the howls of a righteous one who suffered for us.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Our family is in the middle of watching The Sound of Music. Who has watched that classic before?

It's a musical. The main character swings his guitar. There's obviously not a guitar in there when she's dancing and singing. It's a story where we actually tried the karaoke version, because actually as we watched it, suddenly they'll burst into song, and then you can join in and sing along.

That's how well known the musical is. One thing I noticed though, is that they don't really sing when there's normal conversation happening. For example, when someone tells Maria, you need to go to the captain's house.

No one's singing. She's not singing, you need to go to the captain's house. That bit doesn't make it into a song. It seems like there's emotional points at the story when they burst into song.

[4 : 59] Because there are certain times, there are certain points when normal words aren't enough. You kind of just need to burst into song. Whether it's Sound of Music, whether it's The Lion King or Hamilton, an emotional moment needs more than just words.

And that's what we have here. Job chapter 3. Here we actually move into some of the most artistic poetry in our Bibles. From chapter 3 onwards.

And yet they're some of the most heartbreaking words, aren't they? I wonder how you felt when you heard Janet read them. I was telling someone earlier this week that we're going to be, a piece of piece of English, we're going to be in Job chapter 3.

And he said, oh, why don't you just skip to Job 42? It's much easier that way. But I think, and I agree with Christopher Ash who says this, Job 3 is actually a very important chapter for contemporary Christianity today, for us today.

Because there's a version of Christianity that is shallow, that is trite, it is just superficial, right? There is a version of Christianity that has no depth.

[6 : 08] Too often, it just looks like upbeat worship, events all over the place, celebrations, good things, but they leave no room for feeling blue.

Now, one author says, maybe the kind of Christianity we see today would have Jesus singing praise at Lazarus' grave. Here, is a real and blameless believer, we heard about a story last week, who is crying from the depths of woe, and it's in our Bibles.

And if Job's words here are God-breathed, then they have something for us today. Some of you who weren't here last week, we heard the opening of Job's story.

We've already learned he is not suffering because of his sin. He was someone who offered sacrifices to God, who was blameless, upright, God-fearing, a man who shunned evil.

And even after he lost everything, we heard it, didn't we? His first instinct was to worship, to bow down to God where others would not.

[7 : 18] And at this point in the story, we've actually already had Job sitting with his friends in silence for seven days and nights. No one's speaking a word to him because they knew how great his suffering was.

In all of this, chapter 2, verse 10, he did not sin with his lips. And yet, with his lips, right, that's what it said, we explored, there was a hint that maybe there was more coming.

And I think to learn how to drive a car, right, you have to get, you have to eventually get behind the wheel. You can't just watch someone do it forever. And at some point, if we want to move from observing Job's suffering to actually feeling with him, we have to have Job chapter 3.

And so I want to explore it in three parts. I think we see in verses 2 to 10, we see him curse. Verses 11 to 19, we see him lament. And then finally, he asks a question.

So we're going to hear about a curse on his birth, a lament on his life, and then finally, he's going to ask an unanswered question. Why is life bitter? Up to this point, I think the author has presented a little bit of a riddle.

[8 : 31] Will Job's suffering push him to bless God? Or will it push him, maybe even to curse him? And the answer kind of hung in the balance, right? We heard it last week.

You know, we weren't sure which way he was going to go. And so actually, it's really important when here it says, chapter 3, verse 1, after this, Job opened his mouth and he cursed.

But he doesn't curse God. He curses his day. In other words, the day he was born. And then from verse 2 onwards, we are hearing straight from Job's heart. Let me read again.

He said, May the day of my birth perish. And the night, it was said, a boy is born. All right? And as he goes on, verse 4 throughout, you notice that he just comprehensively curses.

It's day and night. He curses the day he was born. Then he curses the night that his parents conceived him. Notice how often the word darkness comes in. Can you see that?

[9 : 34] In the Hebrew, actually, Job uses four different Hebrew words to mean darkness. You know Eskimos or people who live in the Arctic love ice because they have ten different words for ice. Here, Job has four different words and he brings them all out.

That is him using the blackest shades to color his cries. And notice too how in contrast, right, God said very early on in the Bible, let there be light here in chapter 3.

He says, that day, let it be darkness. For Job, his suffering is so painful, he wishes God would just rewind creation. Let me read verses 7 to 9.

May that night be barren. May no shout of joy be heard in it. May those who curse days curse the day. Those who are ready to rouse Leviathan, may its morning stars become dark. may it wait for daylight in vain and not see the first rays of dawn. I don't know if there's one kind of announcement that's guaranteed to bring a joyful response in our society.

[10:42] Surely, it's the baby announcement. I don't know how you like to or prefer to receive them, whether it's the grainy ultrasound, right, full of hope, whether it's the quirky pictures, right, with the muse siblings looking on.

The clever captions, they're hard not to like, right? But not for Job. Job reflects on his birth announcement. He wishes that his parents actually never experienced the joy of having him. Right? Verse 7, let no joyful cry enter. And rather, he wishes, verse 8, those who curse the day, maybe professional mourners, okay, would come and just curse his day. Imagine that. You rock up to a baby shower and you just curse the parents. Or you wish a newlywed couple, I hope your honeymoon is full of pain. Or you go to a gender reveal party and you say, oh, I'm so sorry for you.

What moves Job to do this, right, to curse one of the most hopeful and joyful times of life? He answers himself. Verse 10, for it did not shut the doors of the womb on me.

[11:51] It didn't hide trouble from my eyes. It's not just his pain, right, that makes Job curse his birth. It's the trouble that it's brought.

If Job hadn't been born, he would have never experienced the pain of bankruptcy, the sorrow of burying his own children, the agony of his sickness.

Of course, Job can't rewind the clock, right? Cursing his past doesn't change it. It's still troubled. And yet he keeps speaking.

And so, from verse 11 onwards, we move into his lament. He's cursed his birth and now he laments that his life has just fallen into disorder. And you notice, actually, we see a little bit of a change because verse 11, from there, he starts asking, why?

Why did I not perish at birth and die as I came from the womb? Why were there knees to receive me and breasts that I may be nursed? The moments a baby enters the world, which is what he's describing, they're precious.

[12:57] I don't know how many dads are here, probably just me and Richard and a few others. It's a precious moment, okay, when you hold the baby, when you're there to cut the cord. It's such a precious moment, that first latch, when the baby comes and feeds for the first time.

All of those tender moments and yet, Job only sees it as tragedy. Because all that came from it was the misery he feels now.

His suffering is so raw, there is no positive, no upside to being born into this world. Right? You read verse 16, why was I not hidden away in the ground like a stillborn child?

The word in Hebrew for stillborn child literally is fallout. It sounds a bit graphic, doesn't it? I think our English Bibles are a bit tame. Why was I not hidden like fallout?

You remember how so much sorrow fell upon Job, chapter 1? Now he wishes he was just fallout himself. He's reaching for the grief that mothers who have suffered from a miscarriage or abortion or abortion have felt.

[14:08] And the reason he thinks that being a fallout, being stillborn is better is that at least when you're dead and buried the ground is level. Right? That's what he goes on to say. And when you die, verse 14, 15, you share the same fate as kings and presidents and billionaires.

In the grave, right, the wicked, they stop agitating. Even the small and weary rest the same way as the rich and famous do. And in Job's suffering state in his mind, which is full of grief, death has a strange appealing fairness and freedom and so he's lamenting for it.

Remember, this is righteous Job speaking. No feelings are off limits, right? He wishes he hadn't been born. He wishes he were dead.

And I don't want to presume, but maybe there are some of you here who have considered thoughts very similar to Job.

If ending your life is something you have considered, please talk to someone about it. Talk to a friend, a group leader. Come and have a private word with me. Don't suffer alone.

[15:20] Because even though Job's words are so bleak, we want to notice two things from Job's experience, which I think betray something else. Firstly, Job is speaking, right?

He's speaking from a desperate place right now. This is his raw gut reaction. These words they've poured out just a week after he's lost everything in his life. Okay, so Job in Job 3 is not his normal mental state of mind.

It's not his normal self. I don't know if you've ever tried to get a passport photo, right? And they muck it up. Right? It looks like, you know, you've just woken up, right? And that's okay.

Right? You just tell yourself, that's not really who I am, okay? You know that photo is not what you look like in real life. So Job 3 is bleak, but it's not the full story of Job's mental state.

And we know because in the next weeks you're going to hear him, you know, not just be in this state. So you want to hang with him. You want to hang in there. I cannot promise you, whatever you're feeling now, that it gets better.

[16:20] But I can say this, that your story is not over. The cross, right, comes before the crown. The grave comes before glory. And maybe you need to hear that or remember that to keep going one more day today.

Secondly, Job, right, even though he is lamenting, he sounds like the saddest person in the world. He sounds like he's keen to rest, right, among the dead.

the fact that he's speaking and talking and will keep talking, I think that betrays a restless heart that wants to keep living. Right?

Christopher Ash, again, he puts it really well. He says this, the deep reason for Job's unrest is that he cannot understand his sufferings. Why would a believer, a man of godliness and piety, suffer with such mind-numbing intensity?

Right? This crazy trouble, it shakes the foundations of his moral and ordered universe. He is not going to rest until he has found some resolution to this question. So yes, he is in grief, but he's not gone.

[17:28] He's going to keep talking and we will see that. So we've seen him curse the birth that's brought trouble on his life. We've seen him lament on his life and how it's fallen into such disarray.

And then finally, verse 20 to 26, Job ends his speech with an unanswered question. Right? Why is life so bitter? I don't know if you heard this famous quote from the comedian and outspoken atheist his name's Stephen Fry.

He was once asked on a TV show what he would say if he was confronted by God. If he got to meet God. Suppose it's all true and you walk up to the pearly gates and you are confronted by God, right?

The interviewer asked what would you say to him or her or whatever? And he responded I'd say bone cancer in children? What's that about?

How dare you? How dare you create a world to which there is such misery that is not our fault. It's not right. It's utterly, utterly evil. And he goes on. He says why should I respect Stephen Fry?

[18:35] Why should I respect a capricious mean-minded stupid God who creates a world that is so full of injustice and pain? That's what I would say says Stephen Fry.

And as much as some of us would certainly criticize Stephen Fry's worldview certainly his view of God Job's question wasn't too far off right?

Was it? I mean look at verse 20 again in your Bibles why is light given to him who is in misery and life to the bitterer of soul? Job obviously he is speaking and asking from a different worldview to Stephen.

He says he's given light from God right? He knows that sighing comes to him in verse 24 right? So Job is asking these questions he's grieving and lamenting while trusting in a sovereign God.

Stephen doesn't. But yet Job's underlying question remains why does God give life in the first place if it's just going to be full of bitterness? That's a huge question.

[19:44] Maybe you've asked that. And notice because when it says those who are bitter in soul that's actually in the plural which means Job is not asking just for himself.

This question he is asking on behalf of all of us. Why do people live only to die in a tornado or a car accident?

Why do people live and then they're aborted or abused or assaulted? Why would God create a whole people group and breathe life into them only for them to be locked up, enslaved, genocided? Why does he send terrorist attacks or earthquakes or viruses? Job is asking this question on behalf of everyone even you who has been a bitter of soul.

This is bitterness that for Job sometimes seems like death would be like striking gold he says in verse 21 to 22. And this is bitterness that in verse 24 makes Job howl in grief.

[20 : 49] I've said howl because it says groans in IV but I think it's a little bit too tame. In Job chapter 4 verse 10 he describes Job describes sorry Eliphaz describes a line which is growling and roaring and howling.

It's the same word. And so actually there's no need to sanitize what Job is feeling and saying sometimes before God you want to just scream and sob.

and Job howls because his worst nightmares have come true in real life. That is what verse 25 says. And so why this bitterness actually in this chapter the question hangs in the air doesn't it? There is no neat and tidy solution. We're going to hear Job's friends try and answer the question from their different world views. Job will argue back. Eventually we will hear God himself speak and vindicate Job as one who spoke rightly.

We'll get there but for now the author invites us to sit with Job's unanswered question. Why? Why is light given to those who are bitter in soul?

[22 : 07] on the night that my mum died suddenly I was 20. I'm forever grateful for a friend who just came to our house when she found out and then without asking just stayed the night so that I wouldn't have to grieve alone.

Sure I had questions in my head about God to work out. Sure I had things to think through and be sad about but at that point in time what I needed most was someone's shoulder to cry on.

Someone just to be there. And so Job 3 gives us permission to just sit with the bitter in soul. So I'm going to share three bits of pieces of wisdom and the first thing is to know when to weep with those to weep.

Just to sit with someone who is going through a hard time. We need to learn that. I think we live in an instant fix age. If you're hungry you can get Uber Eats.

If you have a question you can Google it and find the answer straight away. If you're bored Netflix will solve everything instantly. But there is no instant fix for those who are bitter in soul to sit with someone who is suffering.

[23 : 26] So don't look for it. There is a time to offer solutions but when someone is grieving sit with them in sorrow. sure. They might say things that you might think in the back of your head.

They need their theology corrected. Don't tell them that. Just hang on. They may need a gospel reminder and they do. But just sit with them. Wisdom is learning to discern when to speak a word in season and when to weep with those who weep.

To sit with the bitter in soul. And I think the best person who knew this was the Lord Jesus. I wonder if you remembered the Lord Jesus when he went to see Mary and Martha after their brother Lazarus had died.

In John chapter 10 Jesus showed this distinction because in John chapter 10 and 11 Martha comes to him with a painful cry. Lord have you been here?

My brother wouldn't have died. And then to her Jesus says I am the resurrection. And the life. Do you remember that? But then actually straight after Mary her sister Martha's sister comes to Jesus with exactly the same words.

[24 : 39] The same painful cry. Lord have you been here? My brother wouldn't have died. Same question and yet how does Jesus reply? John 11 33 says he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.

And then two verses later he says and he wept. Jesus spoke to Martha. Jesus wept with Mary. Hey wisdom is knowing when to speak and when to weep.

I think second lesson we can learn from Job chapter 3 and perhaps another thing we can do as a church is we may need to recover the practice of lamenting, of being sad together as a church. how many of you felt, be honest, really awkward that we didn't get to stand up and sing a praise song today? Be honest. Yeah? I felt so wrong, right?

There was something inside us that was, this is not usual. In his book Weep With Me, and author Mark Vogrop, he points out actually the lack of lament is actually a new problem in our church, in the Christian church, and particularly in the Western Evangelical church.

[25 : 50] In recent history, it is only in recent history that we have started to only sing one colour out of the many colours of emotions that God gives us.

And so, we need to recover lament in our church somehow. If we're just copying our worship styles and practices from the top hundred charts, right, maybe we will get the same problem too.

We will be like so many other churches that cannot weep with those who weep. And so, think about this, maybe as a church. I wonder what songs we can turn to in order to lament together, in order to just say how broken, how divided, how hurt our world is.

I mean, if Job 3 were set to music, would you dare to sing it in church? If not, why? I don't know, maybe our worship playlists are so infected by a cheap kind of gospel that says you have to be feeling good all the time.

You have to feel prosperous all the time. That false gospel of therapeutic or prosperity stuff, there has no place in true, full, biblical Christianity.

[27 : 02] Maybe that's why there's nothing left for our miserable Christian brothers and sisters to sing. Sure, look, it's right to sing, bless the Lord, or you have been so, so good to me.

But maybe it is also right to sing, is all creation groaning? It is. I mean, the Psalms, they model this. They teach us, praise the Lord with loud, clashing cymbals, Psalm 150.

Psalm 88, though, it invites us to lament when even our closest friend is darkness. We need both. Even if we don't feel what Job feels, someone we love at church does.

And so it is right for us, perhaps, to lament with them, to make space in our gatherings to be weeping with those who weep. So maybe let that be a challenge for us from Job 3.

Find some songs or poems or hymns that you can sing and read in darkness. Maybe listen and share stories of suffering brothers and sisters like Donelda, like others you know.

[28 : 13] Lament, and perhaps we can learn from them. Right? Lindsay Wilson, he puts it really well. I think the book of Job, he says, offers two schemas, ways for faithful Christians to follow.

One, you could imitate the patience of Job in the prologue. But then maybe when it is no longer bearable just to hold your chin up and say everything's alright, maybe you can lament, maybe even protest like Job keeps going to do.

We're going to hear the protest soon, but for now, let's remember that lament is a biblical, godly response to suffering. And I think finally, church, we want to look for the shadow of the cross when we look at a passage like Job 3.

You see, Job sits in darkness and despair. And maybe some of you are in that place, maybe you will be, maybe you know others who are. But as Christians, we know this is not our final station, right?

And because all Scripture is God-breathed and profitable, we want to be bold enough to ask, right, as PCBC English, where is the gospel in Job 3? Where is the gospel in Job 4?

[29 : 29] Right, through to 37 to 42. God's rescue plan, remember, comes through this Bible for us. And it may not be immediately obvious, but I think the good news of the Bible is still there in shadows and types, in hints, and in hopes.

Because consider this, as Job howls and groans in suffering, his deep darkness foreshadows a deeper darkness that another righteous man will endure.

for those he loves. Right, 2,000 years ago, this is the gospel, another blameless believer was born for trouble. He was literally born to die.

And he had sorrow after sorrow poured out into his life, and he experienced bitterness in his soul that was deeper than Job's darkness.

And as our Lord Jesus, as he hung on the cross, as a sacrifice for our sins, as darkness covered the face of the earth, that Good Friday, he groaned.

[30 : 43] No, he didn't groan. Right? He howled those famous words on the cross. Mark 15, 33. Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani, which means, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

You see, at the cross, our Lord Jesus too got no reply to his questions. why was his life bitter? He had to hear back darkness and silence.

And so in a strange way, because Job's howling was shared by Christ himself on the cross, as a church, we know there is at least one person, our God and Savior, who has walked the darkest valleys for our sin.

He has howled in agony as our Savior. our man of sorrows. So yes, we grieve, yes, we lament, but we lament with someone, our Savior, Jesus, who has been there before, for us and with us.

So let's pray. Lord, these words from Job chapter 13 ring so true.

[32 : 05] So, though he slay me, yet will I hope in him. Lord, thank you for your word and how you defend your ways, even though we cannot understand them.

Indeed, we know that our sufferings, Job's sufferings, will turn out for deliverance and for glory, your glory. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.