

The Miserable Cry of Utter Loneliness

by Mack Tomlinson

This sermon delves into Job chapter 3, where Job breaks the seven-day silence and expresses his deep lament of loneliness, hopelessness, and agony. Job vents his overwhelming misery, expressing his regret and questioning 'why' in the midst of his suffering. The sermon emphasizes that true believers may go through dark and despairing times, highlighting the importance of not withdrawing from God but trusting Him even in deep pain.

Scripture: Job 3:1, Psalms 39:2, Job 3:11, Job 3:23, Job 13:15, 1 Peter 4:12, Psalm 34:17, Hebrews 4:16, Job 42:12

Topics: "Suffering", "Trusting God in Pain"

Description

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Transcript

We come to Job 3 to where the first words are spoken as the friends have arrived. You remember in our last two messages we saw the events of suffering unfold and the utter astonishment that Job enters into, and then the seven days of silence. When Job's friends arrive, no one speaks for seven days out of respect for the dying, out of horror, out of a sense of they didn't possibly know what to say at first, they were too grief-stricken, and though they drew near, they were separate from and could not enter into Job's aloneness in his agony and his suffering.

And now it's Job who breaks the seven-day silence. It's Job who speaks first. Chapter 3 is what we will see today.

But he's not speaking to his three friends. He's not even speaking to God. He's speaking to himself.

Out of his heart of misery, he's venting. Have you ever vented? None of you ladies have ever vented to your husband. Have you ever vented to a co-worker? Or brothers or friends? Venting.

That's what Job's doing here. He's talking to himself. Out of the overflow, anguish, and isolation, loneliness of his misery.

Because he knows his life is over. His past is wiped out. And he believes 100% that his future is this.

I'm going to die in increasingly agonizing pain. And they're going to put my body in the ground and that's it. No future.

No hope. Only present misery. This chapter 3 is a lament of loneliness.

It's really a hopeless cry of agony in a broken man. Now if you ever had brokenness, I've seen people with their bodies burned from a fire. I've seen people in unbearable pain.

I've seen people and sat with people whose son or husband or wife has just died and they're numb. And so if any of us went through anything comparable at all, or to any degree that Job has suffered, we would have a venting of agony at least in our thoughts. These are Job's thoughts in chapter 3 put on paper.

We saw his loneliness in chapter 2. But now we're hearing his loneliness. We get to listen in on it. Chapter 3 is really a two-note cry of hopeless despair from the depths of a transparent hurting heart.

A lot of people when their heart's hurting, they stuff it inside and they're silent. They won't talk. Others vent and pour out what they feel.

They've got to get it out. And the two-note cry of Job in chapter 3 is this. The deepest regret and why? Why? Now this is Job's thought.

Job's mind is at work big time. Think of this. Suddenly the thoughts come that he's gone from the immensely wealthy man that he was and he's lost everything.

All his business, all his income is gone. He's a pauper. His ten children lay freshly buried in graves nearby.

His wife can't support him anymore in her agony. She's already advised him to go ahead and take his own life. And then she's off the scene.

So the only friend he has is broken pottery and an ash heap to sit in. And his thoughts. This is exactly what the psalmist expressed in Psalm 39.

The psalmist is musing in his troubled soul. And then he says, I'll speak. He says, I said I'll guard my ways lest I sin with my tongue.

I'll restrain my mouth with a muzzle. I was mute in silence and held my peace even from good. Seven days of silence, Job hadn't seen a thing.

His friends hadn't seen a thing. My heart is hot within me. While I was musing, the fire burned.

Then I spoke with my tongue. The chapter 3 is the then. Then Job begins to speak out of the overflow of his heart.

He only wants an audience of one. I don't know if his friends are hearing him. We know God's hearing him.

But he only wants an audience of one. He doesn't want to talk to anyone. He wants to vent his agony.

Because, think about it, it's his only release. It's his only possible source of any comfort is to be able to express out loud what he's going through. It's his only recourse.

It's his only ability for there to be any kind of comfort. It's the only response. Him being his self-only counselor, he speaks because he has to, but maybe he thinks some relief will come.

All he has are his thoughts because he's been stripped of everything but his thoughts. And in a way, you think of Psalm 1, Job was sitting in the seat of the scornful, kind of. But he still has an awakened heart.

He still has a conscience that works. His mind is active and is able to think. And he's totally transparent with what he says.

So Job 3 is just what Job's feeling and thinking. From the midst of his cesspool of pain, his pit, his dark hole, this slimy, dirty, stinking ash heap both outwardly where he physically sits and inwardly in his spirit and his heart is where Job finds himself. Remember, this was not a place that he caused.

His experience was not anything that he caused. It was not anything that he could foresee or that he would bring about. He would never choose it and he does not understand it at all.

He's trapped and he's shut up to his circumstances and he sees no way out. Indeed, there is no way out until later. So not only does he not want to live anymore, he wishes he had never been born.

He wishes he had never existed. And the poetry language of the chapter is eloquent in just saying that basically. The cry of the ultimate regret is verses 1-9.

Let's look at it. Job 3, 1-9. The cry of the ultimate regret.

We heard it read. We'll refer to it. But notice, it depends on your version, but the New King James says, May the day perish.

May that day be darkness. May God above all these may's. What's going on here? What's Job? What's in his heart? What's he saying? He's just saying he's eloquently placing an Old Testament curse on the fact that he even exists.

And he says it in symbolic language. May the day perish that I was born. Birthday party? No.

Birthday curse. I wish God could rewind time and not let me be conceived. Oh, that I had never even been in my mother's womb.

That I had not been conceived. That I would have no existence. If I could go back before my existence, I would to God I could do that now.

So, Christopher Ashe, the commentator, says here Job is offering a carefully crafted curse on the day of his birth, his existence. See verse 3. I just referred to it. May the day perish on which I was born.

And the night in which it was said a male child is conceived. So, picture this. In that statement, he's picturing nine months.

The news comes. Job's wife's pregnant. The news, a baby's been conceived.

We're pregnant! And then, nine months later, a boy's born. Job's cursing all of it. His conception, his being in the womb, the day he's born.

He's placing a curse on all of it. It's a comprehensive curse of regret and wishing that he had never been born and never even been conceived. And verses 4 and 5 expand on it.

Job, notice this language. He heaps up pictures of darkness on that day. Verse 4. May that day be darkness.

Don't let the light shine on it. May darkness and the shadow of death claim it. May a cloud settle on it.

May the blackness of the day tear afar it. As for that night, may darkness seize it. So there's this picture of absolute judgment and darkness.

He wants it all to be hidden and gone and never even reach the daylight of existence and creation. Ash says this, Job's life is so painful that he's wishing the roots of his existence could be rooted up and never start. That he had never existed in God's mind or in his mother's womb and therefore would never have even been.

Remember that famous old Christmas movie I asked Linda briefly? I couldn't remember the title. Jimmy Stewart. They play it 300 times between... What's the name of it? Yeah, Wonderful Love.

Remember the heart of it was Jimmy Stewart wishes he hadn't been born. So here comes Angel Clearance and he's granted the wish. You've never been.

You've never been born. And it changes everything right in the city, in the town, and he realizes he should have been born. And he's finally glad that he wasn't.

Fast forward to Job 22. Job will curse his cursing. In the end, he'll say, he has 140 more years.

Everything restored. Ten more children. He's going to say then, I'm glad I was born.

I'm not glad I went through that. He was thankful in the end, but not here. If only I had never been.

Job's saying there's no future for me, so I wish I'd never had a beginning. This is his biggest regret ever. It's a lament of moaning and grieving over what's happened and as a result, a real regret that his life ever began.

It's a pointless and ineffective curse obviously because it can happen. It's happened. It can't go back and be unborn.

But this begins a desperate lament, a desperate groaning, verbal groaning. It's an expression of grief and misery. I thought of an old psalm.

Some of you will know it. Remember Buck Owens and Roy Clark? Gloom, despair, and agony on me. Deep, dark depression.

Excessive misery. If it weren't for bad luck, I'd have no luck at all. Gloom, despair, and agony on me.

Well, Buck Owens and Roy Clark were making a joke, but that is what Job felt. It wasn't a joke to him. That's what he feels in his utter loneliness.

And he curses formally his existence. So, that's what's going on in the first half of Job 3. Because out of the heart, the mouth is speaking. We can't enter into what he feels the same way Job's three friends

couldn't.

But we must understand, he's in the darkest pit from which he knows there's no return mentally, emotionally, domestically, financially. He will not return to this world he knows he's going into the place of death soon. So he fully believes.

But the second cry of the chapter is in verses 11-20. And it's one word. Anybody want to guess what it is? Why? Why? Have you ever had something very sad come to your life and that was one of the first things you felt or said? Why has this got to be happening? Why us? Why now? Why not another time? Why not somebody else? Why? The cry of why.

It's a cry of desperation. It's a cry of pain. It's a cry of doubt, confusion, hurt.

And it's even a word of potential bitterness. Why cry out why? Because the human heart and the human mind always will, always must, by nature of our humanness, we will always ask why. When we don't have answers, we want to know why.

When we don't know what's going on, we want to know what's going on. We want some light in our mind. We want some understanding.

Because we think, if I can just understand, if I can just get some answers, if I can just even know one why, I'll be better. I'll handle this better. Why? Why, Lord? Job is longing in his cry of why.

He's longing for relief through death. Look on down in verse 13. He piles up these four consecutive images.

First of all, he says why about seven times in the chapter, all in a row. Verse 11, twice. Verse 12, verse 16, verse 20.

A number of times he's just asking it over and over. But in verse 13, he gives four consecutive images of rest and he wishes he were there. He wants it over.

He wants to be there. Where? He wants to be in the place of death so it'll be over. One time I heard a lady say this.

She knew she was dying. She knew she was fading. I think she thought she was a burden.

And out of the blue, she said to those who loved her, just shoot me. That's kind of what Job's saying. Look at verse 13.

For now, I would have... Here's the first word picture. Laying still. That's a picture of the body being dead and it's just lying still.

Second one, verse 13, I would have been quiet. Oh, the loudness of this pain and the agony of my moanings and the noises around me would be silent. I would have quietness.

The third one is verse 13. I would have been asleep. Then I would have been at rest.

Four pictures he gives consecutively of rest. Now Job doesn't have an answer why, but his mind actively wants one. So, I've quoted Christopher.

Let me just give a thought from him on this to give us more of the picture. The deep reason for Job's unrest is not only his physical pain, it's because he can't understand his suffering. He doesn't know where it's come from.

He doesn't know why. He doesn't know why God's allowed it. He has no clue.

He can't understand why a man who's a believer, who loves God, who's a man of godliness, suffers with such mind-numbing intensity. This inexplicable trouble shakes Job's moral and ordered universe. It is for this reason he cannot and he will not rest until he has found some resolution to this cosmic question of why.

Why do babies die in the womb? Why is the godly young husband cut off in a plane crash or an accident and a wicked guy who deserves nothing but prison lives to be 95? Why? Answer these, oh you human philosophers. There is no big, long, perfect answer to the little word why that Job is crying out seven times in the chapter. Why? Why? It's like if someone said, Job is on a life support machine and he wants somebody to come over and turn the machine off.

That's what he's feeling. Now look at verse 23, what Job says. He says, Why is light given to a man whose way is what? Hidden.

He thinks, what's happening to me is hidden. It's hidden from God's goodness. It's hidden from God's grace.

God's goodness and grace and His light is not reaching my situation. It's hidden. Why is light in my situation hidden the one whom God has what? What does the text say? Hedged in.

It's the picture of Job being pushed in a corner, surrounded, he's trapped, and there's nowhere to go. No way to get out of it. He's hedged in.

He's cornered. You know what a dangerous animal would do if it's cornered? Well, Job's not a dangerous animal, but he's a broken man. And he doesn't like the feeling of getting cornered.

The third grade, they had built a new elementary school where I grew up. And they had a, I guess it was a tornado drill. And they took us down under the school and there was a three foot tall dirt floor under the school.

I don't know how a bad storm came that was going to protect us, but I remember three feet. And we had to sit down. And I started getting claustrophobic.

It was miserable. I was trapped. I wanted out.

I couldn't run. Ever since that day I've had claustrophobic. I had an MRI for a back surgery.

I couldn't even go in the tube. They had to put me out. Job is having that feeling here.

He's hedged in. It's a miserable narrowness into dark hopelessness that traps him. It's a picture like, think of this, the narrowing of life.

Here's a man who's traveled internationally. He's been to 50 countries. He's seen the world.

He's enjoyed it. And then his health changes where he has to stay in the country. He can't take the overseas anymore.

And he continues to get older and decline. Finally, he doesn't have the strength to even travel nationally anymore. He stays in Texas.

Maybe a two day trip with his wife. Only in his state though. And finally, no longer travels.

Limited to his town. Then he declines. It gets more narrow.

His neighborhood. He can take walks in the morning. Finally, he can't walk anymore.

His world is his house. Then it goes from his house to his bedroom. He can no longer get up and go outside and look out the bedroom window.

Now he's bedridden. From the world to being bedridden, the next place is where? The casket. The narrowness of life.

Job was international and he went to being bedridden in the ash heap. He's ready for the casket. That's where he is.

Now notice verse 26. I am not at ease, nor am I quiet. I have no rest, for trouble... what? Comes.

Trouble has come. There's a great emphasis from verses 24 through 26 that things have come upon Job. He didn't welcome them.

He didn't incite them. He didn't start them. Life is picking a fight with him and he can't fight back.

Things come on him like the wind or the rain comes on you if you're outside. Verse 24 says his sighing comes. Verse 24, groanings are pouring over him like water.

Verse 25, what he fears has come upon him. What are you going to do and how are you going to react when things come and you have no control? What are you going to do? What kind of a man are you going to be then? What kind of a godly lady will you be then when things come and you can't control them? We want to control everything. Life's not controllable.

That's why Jesus is the only sure haven of rest and safety and refuge. Verse 25, what he fears has come on him. What he dreads, he says, has fallen on me.

And then verse 26, trouble has come. So Job's the target and life with every calamity imaginable has hit the bullseye. And God shot the arrow.

And the text says it all has happened to him. That's chapter 3. Two cries of lament. Deep regret.

And why? Now let's apply this briefly. So stay with me. How does this apply to you and I? What greater truths do we gain and meditate on from this? Number one, a true believer may be taken by God through times of deepest darkness and despair.

Often true Christians are. A true Christian, a true believer, may be taken by God through and into the deepest times of darkness and despair. And that is no reflection on the validity of their faith, the reality of their faith, the shallowness, the depth, the degree, nothing.

It has no reflection on whether they're a Christian at all. But here's what happens. A person affirmed to be a true Christian before the darkness happens and they remain a true Christian in the time of darkness and they will come through the darkness as a true Christian.

Job said that later. That though he gets refined, he's going to come through as what? Pure gold. He's going to be refined.

So true Christians go through such inexplicable, horrible sorrows. Job did. Abraham had this time of great darkness.

Joseph, a lot of his experience was dungeon-like, prison-like, mistreatment-like, injustice. The good times maybe were half the time, but Joseph went through this and ultimately the Lord Jesus, the man of sorrows. No one ever had more injustice than him.

Ill treatment, wrong treatment, horrible treatment. So, a true believer may be taken by God through times of the deepest darkness and despair. Think it not strange, says the Apostle Peter.

Don't think it strange. Secondly, it is not sinful or wrong, nor is it a failure to experience such times. It's not sinful or wrong, nor is it a failure on your part to experience deep discouragement, depression, or even despair.

Job 3 is an important chapter for contemporary Christianity. See, there's a version of Christianity out there. It's superficial, artificial, and false.

It's shallow, slap-happy, fun, chipper, everything's got to be positive, upbeat all the time, the kind of victorious all the time Christianity. Those people would have sung victory in Jesus at Lazarus' grave rather than being willing to weep. But Jesus wept.

There's been songs in the past that had such words as this, In His presence, our problems disappear. Wrong. I'm just growing and growing, growing and growing, and it's all joy and peace.

Wrong. Real Christianity, the true life of faith, is not happy, happy all the time. It's not conscious peace and victory all the time.

At times, you are buffeted by fears and anxiety, by pain, by doubts, by circumstances, by uncertainty, by spiritual darkness that comes, by dismay, by utter weakness and grief, and by deep experiences you would not choose, and you wish you didn't have to go through it. There was a book about Christians who suffer written not long ago. The title was this, I'm not supposed to feel this way.

Now the author was not teaching that. He is attacking such a thought that Christians aren't supposed to feel this way. Have you ever been really down and you thought, I'm not supposed to feel this way? Those thoughts come.

Well, the book of Job exposes and destroys that idea. Christians can often feel that way. And that's all they feel.

For a season they don't have conscious peace with God and they don't have the peace of God. They don't feel any joy. They feel down.

They feel distant. They feel hurting. They feel confused.

They feel needy. They feel weak. They don't know how to pray anymore.

They don't know what to do. They don't even know how to express it. And they don't want to burden others, so they'll isolate themselves, which is not a right choice.

Christians often feel that way. But it's wrong thinking and it's a wrong response to say I shouldn't feel this way because it leads to Christians don't feel this way, so therefore, I'm probably not one of them. When all the way along, your life has been evidencing being a real one.

But your thoughts come and convince you I'm not supposed to feel this way because I was watching PTL and they were saying joy, joy, joy all the time. Stop watching PTL and read the book of Job. We do feel this way at times.

It's always wrong to tell someone, well, honey, you shouldn't feel that way. Don't ever say that to someone who's hurting. They do feel that way and that doesn't help.

It goes back to Job 2. You become one of Job's friends. You're part of the Three Stooges counseling service when you tell somebody you shouldn't feel that way. Don't ever say that to anyone because it's often not sinful or a failure to feel that way and experience that reality.

It's what God is doing in the hidden heart. It's what He's doing behind the scenes to bring about things in your life that are not seen yet, that are on the way in the future and there's no light in the end of the tunnel yet to see. This is huge, dear brethren, because people beat themselves up wrongly, needlessly, and they defeat themselves and push themselves deeper into defeat when they think it's sinful or wrong or a failure on their part to experience deep failure of heart and sorrow.

Number three, it is sinful when in such difficult pain we withdraw from God rather than trust Him. It's not sinful to experience it. It is sinful when in the pain we withdraw from God and we choose to not trust Him.

See, that's a response of the heart. When you can do nothing, your heart can still trust. When you're in physical pain and you don't feel like talking and you don't know what to pray, your heart can trust.

Your heart can go to the Lord. Your heart can cry out in silence. It's sinful when in such difficult pain if I withdraw from the Lord rather than drawing near to Him and trusting Him.

See, Job felt like he was alone in his experience, but he wasn't ultimately alone, was he? In the hardest things you and I go through, we feel alone, but we're not alone. Job's business and income had stopped. His family was gone, so the closest relationships had stopped.

His wife's support had stopped. His body had stopped. But his heart, meaning his spirit, had not stopped.

His heart was aware of God. His heart was yet trusting in God. His heart never stopped trusting.

Later, he's going to say what? Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. In your hardest things in life, your heart can trust the Lord Jesus Christ. You can still be engaged in a life of faith, though there's no life of pleasure for the moment.

Number four, a discouraged, hurting believer can still trust and cling to Christ when they can do nothing else. Beloved, when the pain is deep, you don't have to do anything, but first be still and just trust. You can't pull yourself up by your self-efforts because you're not strong enough, wise enough, smart enough,

good enough to do it.

Self-improvement doesn't work in the deepest pain. You can't beat yourself up. You can't figure it out.

Reading 10 books may not get you anywhere. You don't have to have all the answers. And you don't have to fix it yourself.

You can be kept by God's grace. You can be helped. You can have the right support.

You can trust in the Lord through it all. So Job's cries in chapter 3 are real. And they're transparent.

And he's right to express them. This lament of agonizing pain God was controlling it to move Job on to where He was going to get him. Through the darkness, on through the darkness, on through the darkness.

Grace to help. Job didn't always realize it. He was given grace to help.

He could have slit his throat in the Ash Sea. He could have ended his life. He wanted to die.

His wife had told him to. He didn't. God kept him all the way.

Even in the midst of his lament of misery. Every child of God will have times of misery. We can have our laments.

And we can still keep trusting. Because all the way, our Savior is going to lead us all the way. Let's pray.

Father, bless Job 3 to our hearts and minds. Open it up to us. Give us understanding.

Give us grace to run the race. Even if we're limping or hurting or crawling. Even if we're sitting.

From our hearts, Lord, let faith arise and trust in the midst of the pitch black darkness that we might be going through. Lord, thank You for Your Word. In the name of our Savior, we pray.

Amen.

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