

Job 3
March 1, 2026

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: Does suffering accomplish anything? Think of believers who endure relentless pain who welcome death to get relief. Can we blame them?! [Let people engage]

Transition:

For a godly man to wish he were dead should not be a surprise to us. Moses asked God to take his life (Num. 11:10–15) because of the persistent rebellion of the nation, and Elijah prayed to die after his escape from Jezebel (1 Kings 19). Jonah also wanted to die (Jonah 4:3). Please note in chapter 3 that Job asks “Why?” five times (vv. 11–12, 23). Job could have endured the pain and grief had he only understood why God was permitting it. “Why?” is an easy question to ask, but it is not always a question that God answers. Job’s intense suffering gave way to **raw honesty**.

When we become perplexed over the trials of life, remember that God is still on the throne. Let’s read how Job felt during his intense suffering and grief.

BOOK:

Job Speaks

- 3** After this, Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. ² He said:
³ “May the day of my birth perish, and the night it was said, ‘A boy is born!’
⁴ That day—may it turn to darkness; may God above not care about it; may no light shine upon it.
⁵ May darkness and deep shadow (shadow of death) claim it once more; may a cloud settle over it; may blackness overwhelm its light.
⁶ 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.
⁷ May that night be barren; may no shout of joy be heard in it.
⁸ May those who curse days (or the sea) curse that day, those who are ready to rouse Leviathan.
⁹ May its morning stars become dark; may it wait for daylight in vain and not see the first rays of dawn,
¹⁰ for it did not shut the doors of the womb on me to hide trouble from my eyes.
¹¹ “Why did I not perish at birth, and die as I came from the womb?
¹² Why were there knees to receive me and breasts that I might be nursed?
¹³ For now I would be lying down in peace; I would be asleep and at rest
¹⁴ with kings and counselors of the earth, who built for themselves places now lying in ruins,
¹⁵ with rulers who had gold, who filled their houses with silver.
¹⁶ Or why was I not hidden in the ground like a stillborn child, like an infant who never saw the light of day?
¹⁷ There the wicked cease from turmoil, and there the weary are at rest.
¹⁸ Captives also enjoy their ease; they no longer hear the slave driver’s shout.

19 The small and the great are there, and the slave is freed from his master.
20 “Why is light given to those in misery, and life to the bitter of soul,
21 to those who long for death that does not come, who search for it more than for hidden
treasure,
22 who are filled with gladness and rejoice when they reach the grave?
23 Why is life given to a man whose way is hidden, whom God has hedged in?
24 For sighing comes to me instead of food; my groans pour out like water.
25 What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me.
26 I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil.”

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What stood out to you? What questions do you have? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about man? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about God or Jesus or the Holy Spirit? [Let people engage]

Q: What is your takeaway? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

God allows honest lament. Job never cursed God – he cursed the day of his birth. We are permitted to bring our darkest emotions to God. Faith is not the absence of anguish; it is bringing anguish to God instead of away from Him.

Those walking through depression or deep grief or intense physical pain are not alone in biblical experience. Scripture **validates** suffering and does not minimize it. Job’s deep despair was not a spiritual failure, but rather a biblical practice. He never lost his faith, nor was he spiritually weak. Let’s embrace and show compassion for those who show emotional honesty.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today’s Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (Job 3). Victor Books.

III. Job’s Perplexity (3)

Do not misunderstand this chapter; Job did not curse God as Satan predicted he would do (1:11; 2:5) or as his wife suggested he do (2:9). It is good to know that Satan cannot predict the future.

What Job did curse was his birthday; he wished he had never been born. He felt he would have been better off to have died at birth than to live and endure such grief. Job's description of the grave in vv. 13–19 must be supplemented with the revelation we have in the NT. Certainly Job is not suggesting that all men, sinners and saints alike, go to one place of rest and blessing; for we know that the lost die and go to a place of punishment, while believers go immediately to the presence of God. "Surely I was born for something better than this!" Job is saying. He was perplexed; he did not know the purpose of God in this suffering.

In vv. 20–24, Job asks, "Why should miserable people such as I have to live at all? Is our misery accomplishing anything? I long to die, but death will not come." Does suffering accomplish anything? When we yield to God, yes, it does. Suffering works for us, not against us (read 2 Cor. 3:7–5:9). Job could not see the "end [purpose] of the Lord" (James 5:11); we can see it because we have had a glimpse into the court of heaven.

Verses 25–26 indicate that Job had often thought about trials and feared he might have to face them. He was a prosperous man, and he wondered what he would do if he lost his wealth and health. He was not living in carnal security or false peace, for his faith was in the Lord and not in his possessions. "Yet trouble came!" Until we have "sat where he sat," let us not be too hard on Job. In the midst of prosperity, it is easy to trust God, but when we lose everything and our pain is so intense we want to die, exercising faith is another matter. Please remember that Job did not curse God; nowhere in the book does Job deny the Lord or question His holiness or His power. In fact, God's justice was Job's real problem: how could such a holy God permit such awful calamity?

For a godly man to wish he were dead should not be a surprise to us. Moses asked God to take his life (Num. 11:10–15) because of the persistent rebellion of the nation, and Elijah prayed to die after his escape from Jezebel (1 Kings 19). Jonah also wanted to die (Jonah 4:3). Please note in chapter 3 that Job asks "Why?" five times (vv. 11–12, 23). Job could have endured the pain and grief had he only understood why God was permitting it. "Why?" is an easy question to ask, but it is not always a question that God immediately answers. Job should have realized that God was in control, that these events were part of a loving plan, and that one day God would make His purposes known.

When you become perplexed over the trials of life, remember that God is still on the throne. See Job 23:10 for an expression of Job's faith: "But he knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold" (NKJV). Job was going through the furnace. But when one of God's children is in the furnace, God is there with him (Isa. 43:1–2 and Dan. 3:25).

Zuck, R. B. (1985). *Job*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 722-724) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

A. Job's death wish (chap. 3)

The silence of Job and his friends was broken when Job bemoaned that he had ever been born and expressed his longing to die. Perhaps this week of agony impressed on him his sense of loss

and reinforced the relentless pain of his disease. Perhaps too he reflected on the injustice of his condition.

In his sad soliloquy of a death wish, Job did not curse God, as Satan had predicted (1:11; 2:5), nor did Job contemplate suicide. But he did regret his birth (3:1–10), wished he had been born dead (vv. 11–19), and longed to die (vv. 20–26).

1. Job's wish that he had not been born (3:1–10)

3:1–3. **Job ... cursed the day of his birth** (lit., “his day”) but interestingly he did not curse God. He wanted his birthday to be wiped from the calendar (cf. v. 6). Job then referred to **the night** which, personified, **said, A boy is born** (lit., “conceived”). In the following verses he elaborated on his day of birth (vv. 4–5), and his night of conception (vv. 6–7a). Then he concluded this poetic unit (vv. 3–10) by mentioning the reason he longed for the removal of his birthday (v. 10).

3:4–6. **That day—may it turn to darkness** is an interesting reversal of God's first-day creative act: “Let there be light” (Gen. 1:3). By praying **May God above not care about it** (lit., “seek it or look for it”), Job hoped that God, by not noticing that day, would therefore not notice him. In Job 3:4–6 Job referred to darkness five times, using four different words. He longed that the day would be (a) “darkness” (*hōšek*, v. 4), and he asked that **darkness (*hōšek*) and (b) deep shadow (*šalmāwet*, v. 5; used only in Job; cf. 10:21; 24:17; 28:3; 34:22; 38:17) and (c) blackness (*kimrîr*) would overwhelm its light** (lit., “terrify it,” v. 5). That word for “blackness,” used only here in the Old Testament, means the blackness accompanying an eclipse, tornado, or heavy storm clouds. Then Job longed that (d) **thick darkness** would **seize the night** of his conception. The Hebrew word for thick darkness (*’ōpel*) is used five times in Job (v. 6; 10:22 [twice]; 23:17; 28:3).

3:7. Continuing his personification of the night, Job wished that the **night** had been **barren** (lit., “stony”), meaning, of course, that his mother would have been barren (as unproductive as stony ground). Emotional Near Easterners customarily shouted when a boy was born, but Job said, **May no shout of joy be heard in** (lit., “pierce”) **it** (the night).

3:8. Job's words, **May those who curse days curse that day, those who are ready to rouse Leviathan**, refers to a custom of enchanters who claimed to make a day unfortunate (to curse it) by raising Leviathan (cf. 41:1; Pss. 74:14; 104:26; Isa. 27:1), a seven-headed sea monster of ancient Near Eastern mythology. When aroused, the dragon would cause an eclipse by swallowing the sun or moon. So if the daytime or nighttime luminary were gone, Job's birthday would, in a sense, be missing. Job was not saying he believed in this mythology. He was probably doing nothing more than utilizing for poetic purposes a common notion his hearers would understand. (See comments on the Leviathan in Job 41.)

3:9–10. The sufferer's wish that **its** (his conceptual night's) **morning stars** would **become dark** refers to the planets Venus and Mercury, easily seen at dawn because of their brilliance (cf. 38:7). **The first rays of dawn** are literally, “eyelids of the morning,” a metaphor in which the morning rays of sunlight coming over the horizon at dawn are likened to the opening eyelids of a person waking up. The same figure is used later (41:18).

By longing for his conceptual night to be shrouded in darkness (3:6), be barren (v. 7), and never to turn to day (v. 9), Job was saying he wished he had never been conceived in his mother's womb. Unfortunately, he said, **the doors** of his mother's **womb** were **not shut**; he was conceived. If her womb had been shut, he would not have seen **trouble** in this life. "Trouble" (*āmāl*, "sorrow, labor") is also used in 4:8; 5:6–7; 7:3; 11:16; 15:35; 16:2 (lit., "comforters of trouble").

2. Job's wish that he had died at birth (3:11–19)

Because Job's desire to blot out his night of conception and the day of his birth could not be fulfilled, he longed to have been stillborn. That, he said, would have been better than his present condition. After cursing his birthday, he subsided into a quieter reflection on the trouble-free condition he would have enjoyed if he had been born dead.

3:11–12. A stillbirth or miscarriage (vv. 11–12) would have resulted in rest in death (vv. 13–15). He repeated that same idea: a stillbirth (v. 16) would have resulted in death (vv. 17–19). Job asked two questions (vv. 11–12). First, he wondered why he could not have died as he **came** out of **the womb**. Job voiced the same complaint again (10:18–19; cf. his death wishes in 3:20–23; 6:8–9; 7:15; 14:13). Having been born dead would have been better than his present existence of turmoil. In the second question, the receiving of the **knees** refers either to his mother's taking him in her lap soon after birth, or to the patriarchs' custom of placing a newborn child on the knees of a paternal ancestor as a symbol that the child was acknowledged as in his line (cf. Gen. 50:23). Had Job's mother not **nursed** him from her **breasts**, he would have died.

3:13–15. Death at birth would have been so much better. In death he would have **peace** and **rest** (cf. vv. 17–18), whereas in life he had turmoil. In fact, he would be in an enviable position with exalted personalities, including **kings ... counselors**, and rich **rulers**.

3:16–19. Longing to have been a miscarried, **hidden** ("buried") fetus and so be **like an infant who never saw the light of day** (cf. vv. 6–7, 9), Job again referred to the restful condition he could have had in death. **There the wicked**, Job thought, no longer are in **turmoil** ("agitation, raging"; the same Heb. word *rōgēz* is used in v. 26; 14:1, "trouble"; and 37:2, "roar") in their restless sin and rebellion; **the weary ... rest**; prisoners are at **ease** (no longer hearing their taskmasters shouting at them to work harder); **the small and the great are together**; **and the slave is freed**. Job, weary with agony, would rest at death; he would no longer be a captive to his disease; he would be free from his slavery to trouble. This picturesque language expresses the experience of rest which a dead person seemingly has, in contrast with the restless condition of the living, who suffer. All who suffer intensely as Job did can appreciate his longing for release through death.

3. Job's wish that he could die then (3:20–26)

3:20–22. For the fourth of five times in this soliloquy, Job asked, "Why?" (cf. vv. 11–12, 16, 23; also cf. 7:20; 13:24) Since he had been conceived and born, and since he was not a stillbirth, he longed to die then as an adult. That would end his suffering. And yet death did not come.

Referring once again to the subject of light and darkness as indicative of life and death (cf. 3:3–9; Ecc. 11:7–8; 12:2), he asked, **Why is light given to those in misery, and life to the bitter of soul?** To Job it seemed incongruous that people like himself who are physically miserable and inwardly bitter are “given” life (cf. v. 23) when they really don’t want it. The Hebrew word for “misery” is related to the noun for “trouble” (v. 10). Neither those who wait quietly (**long for death**) nor those who **search for it** find it. **Death ... does not come.** Like buried **treasure**, it is not found. When sufferers finally do **reach the grave**, Job said, they are glad **and rejoice** because death releases them from pain.

3:23–24. Job again asked **why** (the fifth “why” in this chapter; cf. vv. 11–12, 16, 20) **life** should be **given** (cf. v. 20) to someone who does not want it. Job’s **way** (“path”) was **hidden** (cf. “hidden treasure,” v. 21) so that he could not see where he was going. In fact, Job said **God had hedged him in**. Here for the first time Job asserted that God was the cause of his affliction. Satan had used the word “hedge” to refer to God’s protection of Job (1:10). Now Job used the word to refer to God’s restrictions on him. His suffering limited his freedom of movement. Therefore, Job was **sighing** rather than eating; his illness had made him lose his appetite. And his groaning was unending **like the water** of a waterfall. The word for **groans** is used of the roaring of a lion (4:10; cf. Ps. 32:3).

3:25–26. At the beginning of Job’s trials, when he heard of the loss of one blessing, he **feared** the loss of another. And hearing of the second one, he feared yet another, and so on. His restless, turbulent condition is summarized in the conclusion of this soliloquy. Though he longed for **peace with quietness and rest** (cf. vv. 13, 17–18), he experienced **only turmoil** (lit., “agitation”; cf. v. 17).

Job’s desire for death, his craving for the grave, emphatically underscores the extremities of his financial, physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual pain. Only those godly people who have relished release from life’s woes through the gate of death can fully appreciate Job’s mournful wail. Job here voiced not the injustice of his plight but the intensity of it. Later, as his agony wore on, he spoke of its injustice.

Garrett, D. A. (1998). *The Poetic and Wisdom Books*. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman Concise Bible Commentary* (pp. 204-205). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Opening Soliloquy (3:1–26). The day of birth is to the individual what creation is to the whole world. Job cursed the day of his birth and, in doing so, reversed the language of Genesis 1. He called for darkness to overwhelm the day in contrast to the “Let there be light” of Genesis 1:3. He called for the stars and sun to be blotted out (contrast Gen. 1:14–19). Job even invoked the name of Leviathan, a monster symbolic of destruction and chaos (see comments on chap. 41). Job desired creation to revert to chaos (Gen. 1:2). For him the order and structure of the universe had already been turned upside down, and life no longer made sense.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (Job 3). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.