



# GOD IS SOVEREIGN

Job 1

**READ** part of article about Kenya gunman... **WHY?**

A well-educated, law-school graduate, son of a government official, goes postal in a college? **WHY?**  
I'm sure the Christians were praying. Christians in persecuted nations pray most fervently!

A suicidal Co-Pilot crashes a plane into mountainside – killing over 100 innocent people. **WHY?**

I don't have any jokes today. This is a solemn message sparked on by several recent circumstances and some memories. Why do things like this happen? Why does God "allow" such events to take place? People have to come to me this week to ask for prayer about things like this and ask – **WHY?** My answer is... **I don't know Why!** No matter what you've been told or what you think, pastors do not have any more insight into the mysteries of God and you do. I would hope that my ordination certificate would qualify me to answer for God, but He hasn't granted that ability to any human as far as I know, except in a prophetic word on occasion. So how are we supposed to deal with all this evil?

Let's take a look as the one person in the Bible who could justifiably ask the question – **WHY?** - **JOB!**

**Please turn with me to Job chapter 1 – Let's read about a day in the life of a righteous man like Job...**

Notes of Interest in our Text:

- 1 – Satan, the Accuser, had direct entrance to God's throne
- 2 – He had been watching everything going on here on earth. Hmm.
- 3 – Job was a righteous man of integrity – who did nothing wrong
- 4 – All this happened in one calendar day (can you imagine?).
- 5 – Job suffered what seemed like complete devastation, but ... There was even more to come...

In Ch. 2 we see a repeat of Satan, the Accuser, appearing before God again. God asks him if he noticed Job that he did not fail the test or turn away from following God. He is a man of integrity, ***“even though you urged me to harm him without cause.”***

Satan replies – ***“skin for skin... A man will give up everything he has to save his life.”*** So more intense suffering was imposed upon Job. He was near death with sores and boils on his body. He was in intense agony physically, emotionally and spiritually. What do you do in this situation? **WHY?**

This is the theme of Job – **WHY?** Isn't this our theme as well? We ask God, **WHY?** All the time.

**Why** do the innocent suffer tragedy? **Why** do infants suffer life-threatening diseases? **Why** do our children and grandchildren have to deal with cancer or autism or anything else you can fill in that blank?

**I don't know!** But, I know this; **God is sovereign!** He has a plan. He knows what's happening, even when I don't. He knows the end from the beginning. I may not be able to understand or even accept it, but He is in control. It takes a lifetime of studying Scripture to even get a glimpse of God's Sovereignty.

There are numerous examples in Scripture of things going wrong, but God steps in to show His Sovereignty...

When Elijah was the prophet in Israel, he helped a widow and her son who were destitute. Because of him, they survived with only a little oil and a handful of flour for days. The Bible tells us this ...

***1 Kings 17:<sup>17</sup> Some time later the woman's son became sick. He grew worse and worse, and finally he died. <sup>18</sup> Then she said to Elijah, "O man of God, what have you done to me? Have you come here to point out my sins and kill my son?"***

Here was a woman of faith, who experienced God's miraculous hand in her life, but now things were different. Her son was sick and then died. I'm sure she was praying. She lashes out at the prophet, and to God in her despair and anger.

***<sup>19</sup> But Elijah replied, "Give me your son." And he took the child's body from her arms, carried him up the stairs to the room where he was staying, and laid the body on his bed. <sup>20</sup> Then Elijah cried out to the LORD, "O LORD my God, why have you brought tragedy to this widow who has opened her home to me, causing her son to die?"***

***<sup>21</sup> And he stretched himself out over the child three times and cried out to the LORD, "O LORD my God, please let this child's life return to him." <sup>22</sup> The LORD heard Elijah's prayer, and the life of the child returned, and he revived! <sup>23</sup> Then Elijah brought him down from the upper room and gave him to his mother. "Look!" he said. "Your son is alive!"***

If you think our sermons are long, listen to this story from ACTS...

***Acts 20:7 - On the first day of the week, we gathered with the local believers to share in the Lord's Supper. Paul was preaching to them, and since he was leaving the next day, he kept talking until midnight. <sup>8</sup> The upstairs room where we met was lighted with many flickering lamps. <sup>9</sup> As Paul spoke on and on, a young man named Eutychus, sitting on the windowsill, became very drowsy. Finally, he fell sound asleep and dropped three stories to his death below. <sup>10</sup> Paul went down, bent over him, and took him into his arms. "Don't worry," he said, "he's alive!" <sup>11</sup> Then they all went back upstairs, shared in the Lord's Supper, and ate together. Paul continued talking to them until dawn, and then he left. <sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, the young man was taken home alive and well, and everyone was greatly relieved.***

Eutychus was innocent. He was a victim of circumstance. He was listening to a sermon from Paul. How could this happen? He wasn't in sin; he wasn't doing anything wrong. How can we justify this death? We can't. So the question remains... **WHY?** Paul comes to save the day and then goes on preaching until day-break. But – what was going before Paul raised Eutychus back to life? That part was unexpected. In our lives things happen that are devastating. Unless God miraculously intervenes, the natural course of events is disastrous. We really have no control over these situations. **BUT – GOD is Sovereign.**

**John 11 - A man named Lazarus was sick. He lived in Bethany with his sisters, Mary and Martha. <sup>2</sup> This is the Mary who later poured the expensive perfume on the Lord's feet and wiped them with her hair. Her brother, Lazarus, was sick. <sup>3</sup> So the two sisters sent a message to Jesus telling him, "Lord, your dear friend is very sick."**

**<sup>4</sup> But when Jesus heard about it he said, "Lazarus's sickness will not end in death. No, it happened for the glory of God so that the Son of God will receive glory from this." <sup>5</sup> So although Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, <sup>6</sup> he stayed where he was for the next two days. <sup>7</sup> Finally, he said to his disciples, "Let's go back to Judea."**

**<sup>17</sup> When Jesus arrived at Bethany, he was told that Lazarus had already been in his grave for four days. <sup>18</sup> Bethany was only a few miles down the road from Jerusalem, <sup>19</sup> and many of the people had come to console Martha and Mary in their loss. <sup>20</sup> When Martha got word that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him. But Mary stayed in the house. <sup>21</sup> Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died."**

**<sup>38</sup> Jesus was still angry as he arrived at the tomb, a cave with a stone rolled across its entrance. <sup>39</sup> "Roll the stone aside," Jesus told them.**

We know that story... Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. The family and friends were distraught. They prayed diligently, I'm sure. However, their prayers didn't seem to be heard; Lazarus died anyway. Can you relate? So **why** are some prayers answered the way we want and others are not? **I don't know!**

These Scripture stories all have happy endings, but what happens when they don't? Too many times in life we face situations that we pray about and they go really wrong. People die, people are maimed, and people suffer life-long disabilities. We prayed. We believed. But, things did work out as we wanted.

#### **WHY?**

*"There was a man who gave his business to God. He had hassled over it for years. He had wrestled with it and fought it for two decades. One day he decided, 'I've had it; that's enough!' He had heard from his pastor that Sunday morning about the value of turning his entire business over to God. It was when he drove away from church that he decided he had worried enough. By the time he got home, he had totally and unequivocally committed his business to God.*

*That very night his place of business caught on fire. He got an emergency call. He rather calmly drove down to the commercial residence and was standing on the street, watching the place go up in flames. He was sort of smiling to himself. One of his colleagues raced to his side and questioned his relaxed attitude about what was happening. 'Man! Don't you know what's happening to you? ... It's ... it's burning up!'*

*He replied, 'I know it. I know it. No problem, Fred. This morning I gave this company to God, and if He wants to burn it up, that's His business.'"* (Charles Swindoll, Living on the Ragged Edge).

**That's resolve in God's Sovereignty!**

Last week at bowling a young man named CJ came to me with two women members of his team about the same age as he. He is the son of the man, Chris, who played electric guitar with Kelley while I was away last year. He was very upset and asked, Pastor Nick, would you pray with me and for a situation. Of course I was willing, so he explained about his friend, April's dad, Stephen, who had heart surgery, but something went wrong and he was dying. They had just disconnected his life support and Steve was about to pass to the next life. I asked if they knew if Steve knew the Lord and had a relationship with Jesus. They weren't sure. I prayed as best I could under the circumstances, but I can't presume to know God's will, and I'm not so bold to declare things I have no control over as if I did. We could only ask for God to be merciful, give peace to Steve and his family, and to take them all through the experience by their side. CJ was in tears, but pulled himself together, and his team bowled. During the evening CJ was told that Steve passed away soon after being disconnected. He was visibly shaken and seemingly angry.

Sixteen years ago next month, on a Saturday, when HPYC was a corporation and I was president, we had our monthly board of directors meeting in the church kitchen. After the meeting, my best friend, George and Mary Ann and Corinne and I were planning to take a motorcycle ride to Stony Brook University, where there was a large craft fair. We didn't hear back from George and Mary Ann. At our meeting that morning George was experiencing chest pains. Having had by-pass surgery a few years earlier, he knew what he was feeling, and he and Mary Ann drove to Brookhaven Hospital ER. George was kept. PJ, myself and the then teen director, Walter, went to visit George. The plan was to transport him to Stony Brook Hospital for another by-pass surgery. PJ asked him if he was OK with everything spiritually. George replied that he was fine. If anything were to happen to him, it would be like walking through a door from this life to the next where Jesus would be waiting to welcome him home. I was amazed, but happy to hear of his strong faith at a time like that.

George was scheduled for the second by-pass at Stony Brook Hospital. I went to work at the Lab. I didn't think much of things. I prayed for George and the success of the surgery, a speedy recovery, and that he would be restored to his family quickly – you know – normal prays for a time like this. During lunch time, I went out to the practice field to hit golf balls and continue to pray. When I returned to my office I had a message that George had passed away. The surgery was a success, but they just couldn't keep his heart beating on its own. I was crushed – as was the entire family. I was ANGRY – angry at God, angry at myself for treating this so casually, angry at George, angry at the situation. It was all so surreal and unbelievable. I went to the church and cried at the altar for a while until PJ came to try to console me.

I understood too well how CJ felt last week. It brought me back to a place of deep pain, confusion, anger, and questions.

After bowling, I waiting to talk with CJ again before leaving. I had to tell him that God is sovereign. He has a plan that we often can't understand. It's OK to question and be confused. It's even OK to be angry. But in the end, we need to realize his ways are not our ways. He doesn't operate in our realm of understanding or desires. But – He is perfect and in control of everything. He never makes mistakes, and he loves us and will be with us even if we can't handle or understand what is going on.

I want to end with another example from the Bible – Joseph. This story may relate more than any other the questions and disappointments we may experience when we choose to serve God and find ourselves in situations that are unfair or just don't make any sense.

We all know the story of Joseph, the favorite son of Jacob (Israel). He had dreams that revealed that his brothers and even his father and mother would bow before him. This enraged his brother's jealousy even more. They plotted to kill him. One day they ambushed him and took the special garment his father gave him off and sprinkled it with animal blood. They dumped Joe into a cistern and brought the coat back to Jacob saying that Joseph was killed by animals. Things were not going the way Joe thought they should. **WHY?**

They then sold him to a band of gypsies headed for Egypt. They, in turn, sold him to Potiphar as a slave. But Joseph won the favor of Potiphar and became a trusted member of the house. God was with him. Eventually, Potiphar's wife wanted a piece of Joseph and tried to seduce him. But Joe was a man of integrity and would not yield. She then grabbed for him and Joe left his jacket behind in her hands and fled. She had false evidence against him and Joe was thrown into prison. Unfair? Yep, but **WHY?**

In prison Joseph again gained favor. The guard trusted him and saw he was special and could interpret dreams. Joe interpreted dreams for a couple of prisoners from the king's palace. All he asked is that they would put in a good word for him with the king – but they didn't. Promises, promises. **WHY?**

Then the king had a dream that no one could interpret. Finally, it was remembered that Joseph could accurately interpret dreams. Joe came through – he predicted 7 years of plenty followed by 7 years of famine. His wisdom (from God) impressed the king, who put Joe in charge of all the produce affairs in Egypt. Things went exactly as Joseph predicted – of course. The king set Joe up as second in command after the King. He was now a man of high authority.

So things worked out well for Joseph overall, but what about those circumstances where it looked like God abandoned him? What about those times where he was mistreated and treated unfairly? **WHY?**

The Joseph story takes up quite a large part of Genesis – Ch. 37-50. Finally Jacob died and the Egyptians embalmed him – their custom. Joseph and a contingent took Jacob back to Canaan and buried him there. Then Joseph returned to Egypt. Let's look at how this story ends...

***Gen: 50:14-21 - After burying Jacob, Joseph returned to Egypt with his brothers and all who had accompanied him to his father's burial. <sup>15</sup> But now that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers became fearful. "Now Joseph will show his anger and pay us back for all the wrong we did to him," they said.***

***<sup>16</sup> So they sent this message to Joseph: "Before your father died, he instructed us <sup>17</sup> to say to you: 'Please forgive your brothers for the great wrong they did to you—for their sin in treating you so cruelly.' So we, the servants of the God of your father, beg you to forgive our sin." When Joseph received the message, he broke down and wept. <sup>18</sup> Then his brothers came and threw themselves down before Joseph. "Look, we are your slaves!" they said.***

***<sup>19</sup> But Joseph replied, "Don't be afraid of me. Am I God, that I can punish you? <sup>20</sup> You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people. <sup>21</sup> No, don't be afraid. I will continue to take care of you and your children." So he reassured them by speaking kindly to them.***

What are you going through – or – what will you be going through. I have had a week of crazy, unfair, bad circumstances that just shouldn't be happening. Things have been prayed for, while others just happened out of the blue. I can't explain the reasons for some things. I can't claim to understand why these things are happening. I don't have many answers except one...

God is Sovereign. He knows what he's doing even if I don't understand or agree. His ways are higher than my ways. I can only trust that he knows what he is doing and has the master plan in place and is in control. We can ask him WHY when get to Heaven, but until then we can only trust and have the hope of knowing that ... **God is Sovereign.**