

Job 7: 11-21; “Am I a Sea Serpent?”, Sermon # 15 in the series entitled – “Remember to Magnify His Work”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on February 7th, 2021, in the Afternoon Worship.

The question which Job poses to God, out of his frustration with the situation that he is in, is this: Am I a sea, or a sea serpent, that You set a guard over me? And what I want to do, before we observe the communion this afternoon, is to give you this proposition: Our God is a God who does set a guard over His beloved people during the times when Satan is attacking us, and when He is teaching us the greatest lessons of our lives.

From this particular text I want to show you the 3 times and ways that God did this for Job; setting a guard over him. 1st of all – God set a guard over Job when he wanted His own life to end. 2nd – God set a guard over Job when he thought that God was making him his target. And 3rd – God set a guard over Job when he thought the God was not pardoning his transgressions. Let’s consider together at this time, just how righteous and holy God is, in all of His ways, that He does set a guard over His people.

1st of all – God set a guard over Job when he wanted His own life to end.

(verses 11-16)

Verse 11 says – “Therefore I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.” And verses 14 and 15 – “Then You scare me with dreams and terrify me with visions, so that my soul chooses strangling and death rather than my body.” Now, if you will recall past chapters of this book, Job’s friends have wanted him to stop complaining, and to confess his sins, so that God would forgive him and become his favorable to him once again. But, he wasn’t going to stop complaining. Instead he was going to complain all the more, so that they would see more of his pitiful condition and have compassion on him and pray for him.

His friends were not showing him compassion, for they thought that he had sinned against God in some great way that they did not know. They thought that he was a hypocrite pretending to be righteous. But they were wrong, and they didn’t know it, yet. They wrongly thought that if a man suffers in the way that Job was suffering, that it would always be for his sins. This was not true, but there have been many times in history where this has had to be proved, even to Christians. We know that Job was not going through this great trial because of his sins. He was going through this great trial because he was a man of integrity. Actually, he was going through this trial because there was no one like him on the earth. He was a man who feared God and was turning away from evil. That is why he was attacked by Satan. Satan wanted to disprove his righteousness and stop God’s boasting in Job.

Let’s think about what Job was going through, and you will see why this was necessary, even though Job misconstrued what God was doing and what He was permitting and ordaining for his life at this time. Job knew that God was sovereign over all things and so He could not understand why God would ordain this concerning him; that he would lose, his children, his possessions, his health, and his good reputation in the sight of his wife and friends. So this was a great spiritual contest that Job was in the middle of; a spiritual contest between Satan and God, and Job did not know it was taking place in the heavenly places. Job was suffering so greatly under Satan’s attacks that he wanted his life to end.

But God certainly did not want Job’s life to end. He had great purposes to outworks and accomplish with his life which affect us here today. We need to remember that God was supporting Job all during this trial. His thoughts were perfect and loving toward Job all through this trial, even when He had to reprove Job at the end of it. But it is because God loved Job, that He knew that in a righteous and loving way, He had to set a guard over him. He had to protect him from himself. He had to uphold Him in his soul, so that he would not completely despair of life, and

His favor. But Job was hard pressed. He was not only complaining to himself and to his friends about the continuance of his life. But He was complaining to God Himself and he was thinking wrongly of how God was thinking about him. “Am I a sea, or a sea serpent, that You set a guard over me?” “When I say, ‘My bed will comfort me, my couch will ease my complaint’, then You scare me with dreams and terrify me with visions, so that my soul chooses strangling and death rather than my body.” “I loathe my life; I would not want to live forever.” “Let me alone, for my days are but a breath.”

So Job was talking directly to God when he said these things. And he was questioning the way that God saw him; the way that God was thinking about him. Sometimes this happens to Christian people. They wonder about the way that God is looking at them based upon His providential ordering of things in their life. They have the thought that God is scrutinizing their life too minutely, and that by the way that He has ordered things for them in particular, He is not looking at them rightly. He appears to them to have become their enemy.

What does Job mean then, when he asks God whether He saw him as a sea, or a sea serpent, that needed a guard set over him? He is saying – Do you really think that I am that dangerous, God, that this is the way that I need to be treated? You will not let up on me to let me have even the comfort of a good night’s sleep, and when I have dreams, You scare me with them and terrify me with visions of what my end on this earth might be? You will remember that in the Beginning, in Genesis chapter 1, verses 6-8 that God said – “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.” “Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so.” “And God called the firmament heaven.”

And then in verse 9 that God said – “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear; and it was so.” “And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas.” “And God saw that it was good?” Yes, this was so, and was probably being remembered by Job at this point. He saw all of God’s waters and billows passing over him, and he knew that God was well able to divide the waters from the waters and make His sea calm. Why was it then, he thought to himself, that God was looking at him as though he was an unrighteous sea; the waters of his life, those waters which God was hemming in, so much so that they would crash against the rocks of his life; those hard things which had come, and now he knew that nothing could become calm for him. Job knew that God was sovereign over the waters, and this is what bothered him.

Actually, Job was experiencing God’s looking at him in the way that the waters are described in Psalm 77, verses 16-20. “The waters saw You, O God; the waters saw You, they were afraid.” “The depths also trembled.” “The clouds poured out water; the skies sent out a sound Your arrows also flashed about. “The voice of Your thunder was in the whirlwind; the lightnings lit up the world; the earth trembled and shook.” “Your way was in the sea, Your path in the great waters, and Your footsteps were known.” This is how Job saw God. And he was afraid that he could not endure God’s dealing with him in this fearful awful way anymore. He would rather die. He would not take his own life, but he would prefer that someone might strangle him, rather than he should continue to live and experience the things that he was experiencing.

So he asks God whether He saw him this way, as a sea serpent; one that men needed to be warned against, a monster of the great deep, so great in his destructive abilities, that he needed to be sought after, and hunted down, so as to take his life? Am I really that great an evil; that great a threat to the cause of righteousness? Later on in this book, in chapter 40, when God Himself addresses Job, He speaks specifically of Behemoth, in this way as a sea serpent. Except, instead of His addressing Job in this way, and calling him a sea serpent, He speaks of seeing His own ways being displayed in such a creature, in a good way.

Listen to verses 15-24 of chapter 40 – “Look now at the behemoth, which I made along with you; he eats grass like an ox.” “See now, his strength is in his hips, and his power is in his stomach

muscles.” “He moves his tail like a cedar; the sinews of his thighs are tightly knit.” “His bones are like beams of bronze, his ribs like bars of iron.” “He is the first of the ways of God; only He who made him can bring near His sword.” “Surely the mountains yield food for him, and all the beasts of the field play there.” “He lies under the lotus trees, in a covert of reeds and marsh.” “The lotus trees cover him with their shade; the willows by the brook surround him. “Indeed the river may rage, yet he is not disturbed; He is confident, though the Jordan gushes into his mouth, though he takes it in his eyes, or one pierces his nose with a snare.”

So God describes this sea serpent as strong, having a large tail; bones like beams of bronze, and ribs like bars of iron. He is the first of the ways of God; that is, that He is invincible in His strength. The mountains yield food for him, and yet he is gentle enough that all of the beasts of the field play there. He can lie very still in the marsh, and the lotus trees cover and conceal him. The river may rage, and yet he is not disturbed. He is confident, though the Jordan gushes into his mouth. That is, he can take great waters coming against him, and take it in his eyes, and he is confident. If one pierces his nose with a snare, still he is confident.

That is what God Himself is like; against all opposition, He still prevails. And, by the way, this is how God wanted Job to be able to react against all the barbs of Satan which were coming at him, and piercing his nose, so that He thought he wanted his life to end. Dear Christian, when you face Satanic opposition, if you have been living the consistent Christian life in godliness, you need to remember not to give up, or to think that God has become your enemy. Actually, God is building proven character into your life, even during the worst of circumstances, and Satanic attack. He is making you into a Behemoth of faith.

2nd – God set a guard over Job when he thought that God was making him his target.

He had to do this to protect Job from drawing false conclusions about Him, that is God. For listen to what Job says in verse 17 – What is man, that you should exalt him, that You should set Your heart on him, that You should visit him every morning and test him every moment?” “How long?” “Will you not look away from me, and let me alone till I swallow my saliva?” “Have I sinned?” “What have I done to You, O watcher of men?” “Why have You set me as Your target, so that I am a burden to myself?” This was Job’s impression of what God was doing to him, when all the while, it was actually Satan who making him as his target. It was Satan who wouldn’t let him alone long enough to swallow his own saliva!

We need to see something from this that relates to the Lord’s Supper which we will observe in just a few minutes. God does set His heart upon all those who believe in Him. It is His purpose to make His saints into trophies of His grace. He does have His eyes on them at all times, but it is in the best of ways. He has His eyes upon them in ways of love and concern and care over them at all times. Elihu says this later on in chapter 36, verse 7 – “He does not withdraw His eyes from the righteous; but they are on the throne with kings.” And this is not at all what Job felt. He felt that God was grinding him under His feet. But all this was from Satan’s attack. It is true that God permitted it. But God’s purpose is holy and righteous in every way in regard to what Job was going through.

Sometimes we as Christians may have a wrong view of God’s sovereignty. We look at it only in terms of His power and not in terms of His love and His preservation of us, soul and body. We need to understand that when God afflicts His own people and when He permits Satan to tempt or to test, He will meet Satan’s accusations and attacks with His own observations of His purpose and will, in the outworking of what happens to that child of His. His purpose is not to destroy their faith, but it is to build it, and to establish it, especially when they are under Satanic attack. He is indeed the watcher of men. But He does not set them up as His target in the sense that Job is stating here. He does not shoot His arrows at the righteous. His ultimate purpose is that they will make their boast in Him; seeing Christ as their wisdom and sanctification.

Why doesn’t God set up believers as his target? Because He has shot them all the arrows of His righteous wrath and justice at His Son at the cross. He set up His own Beloved Son as His target at

the cross. Job believed in a future coming Redeemer. We know that. But what he did not know was that one day in the future, God would shoot arrow after arrow, so to speak, into His own Son's holy and loving heart at the cross, so that sinners like you and me, and yes, like Job also, could know His love and care and favor and blessing, time and time and time again during their afflictions. Even when we have doubts and fears, even when we have committed sins, even when we as Christians fail to see God rightly, He does not take His holy and loving gaze away from us.

So when you are going through the most awful trials, and testings, and temptations, will you not remember this? You may feel like you are a burden to yourself at such times. You may think that God is tearing you apart. But it is not so. You are not a burden to God and to Christ. God is for you! And if God is for you, then who can be against you? Why should God exalt us to such great and eternal spiritual blessings? Why should He set His heart on us, visiting us with His lovingkindness, which is new every morning, and show us His faithfulness each and every day? He does it for Christ's sake.

And why does He permit these things, ordain them for us, and then providentially go about to order situations and circumstances of adversity, difficulty, trial, and suffering to take place in our lives? It is to build your faith. It is to forward your sanctification. It is to show you His strength. It is He who is like the sea, vast and broad and powerful in the breath, the length, the depth, and the height of His love. His purpose is to build faith and to make you more faithful, holy, and righteous. These things He uses, to make you over into the image of His Son. So let us come to the table together and celebrate these good things, now, and remember our Lord, who remembers us.

3rd – God set a guard over Job when he thought the God was not pardoning his transgressions.

God was continually pardoning his sins all through this trial, through Jesus Christ our Lord. But think about Job's doubts. Job says – "Why do You not pardon my transgression, and take away my iniquity?" "For now I will lie down in the dust, and You will seek me diligently, but I will no longer be." Oh, the sad, sad, view that Job had of God at this time in his experience. Dearly beloved, do you not see that God intended Job to come to this very point in his experience so that he could learn something more about God's faithfulness to him personally? Truly, it is so! What is wonderful is that here is Job admitting that he was a sinner to God, even though before his 3 friends he would not admit to them that he had done something sinful that would lead God to determine that these awful things would happen to him.

He did not feel in his experience that God had pardoned his transgressions, or was taking away his iniquity. In other words, he did not have assurance of his salvation at this point, even though he was the most righteous man on the face of the earth. How was he to once again have this sweet sense of assurance and blessing in his life? Only if God intervened, and he would, for Christ's sake. Let us remember, brethren, that this is why Christ died, so that we might be forgiven of all of our sins, not some of them. In Isaiah 53: 10, it says – "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him (to crush Him; He has put Him to grief." "When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." "He shall see the travail of His soul, and be satisfied."

Well, Job would see the travail of his soul and he too would be satisfied. But it would not be because of his own righteousness, for that was not a perfect righteousness, as we see here. But it would be vindicated and satisfied and blessed by God, and prospered both spiritually and physically when this trial came to an end, because of Christ. And my brethren, the same will be the case with us, in regard to all of the trials that we go through, as well. Let us remember that all of our salvation and all of our assurance of that salvation is something that rests upon Christ; not upon our feelings concerning what we have gone through, or what we are going through, or what we think we deserve. None of deserves or is worthy of the least of God's mercies. But we shall know them all because of the faithfulness of Christ. Let us now remember Him.

