

God's Message to Us in Job

Halifax, NS

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Introduction

This afternoon, we will be looking at God's message to us in Job.

- As most of you know, I have been preaching one (or occasionally two) sermons on each book of the Bible to give us an overview of the whole Bible.
 - The Bible is written in such a way that it speaks to God's people in every generation.

Job deals with the life of a godly man who lived before the formation of Israel as God's covenant people.

- Job is more or less a contemporary of Abraham, and is a more godly man than Abraham was when God first spoke to him.
 - But how did Job know God if he was not an Israelite?
 - He had the revelation that everyone in his day had (or should have had).
 - They all came from Noah, so the flood was still strongly in their memory and so was the tower of Babel.
 - And of course from Noah, they had the testimony of Adam and Eve about the fall into sin and about the promise of a redeemer and of forgiveness through the shedding of blood.
 - They knew, or should have known, that God was a righteous and sovereign judge who would not tolerate sin and who required redemption by blood if we were to serve Him.
 - Until God appointed the Levites to offer sacrifices, the patriarch of each home was responsible to serve as priest, offering sacrifices for the forgiveness of sin.

Job is a clear example of a man who was a godly believer, a redeemed man.

- Unlike Abraham whom God called away from service to idols, there is no indication that Job served idols.
 - He and his friends appear to be men who had continued in faithful service to the Lord, trusting in the grace of God as promised.
- God Himself tells us that there is no one like Job as you can see in Job 1:8.
 - **Job 1:8: Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that *there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?*"**
- Look at how Job is introduced to us in the inspired record of scripture in Job 1:1-5:
 - **Job 1:1-5: There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil.**
 - To say that a man is blameless means that he continues to walk with God—of course we all sin, but a blameless man does not live in sin.
 - If he falls into sin, he repents and seeks the forgiveness that God has promised through the blood of the covenant.
 - That Job feared God means that he saw God as the one who blesses and curses.
 - When you fear man instead of God, you live as if man has the ultimate power to bless and curse (as if humans have the power to bless or to curse—to make

you happy or to ruin you), but when you fear God, you recognise that only He can ultimately make or break you and so you live for Him.

- Verses 2-5 go on to describe Job further...
- **2 And seven sons and three daughters were born to him. 3 Also, his possessions were seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and a very large household, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the East. 4 And his sons would go and feast in their houses, each on his appointed day, and would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. 5 So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, "It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did regularly.**
- Here you can see what I was talking about before.
 - No godly man since the fall of Adam trusts in his own righteousness.
 - Job offered sacrifices for his family regularly because he knew that they stood in need of God's forgiveness.
 - He knew that God had promised a redeemer and he knew that blood must be shed to atone for sin.
 - That is why he regularly offered up sacrifices to God as priest of his home.
- And again, I would draw your attention to verse 8 where God tells Satan that Job stands out among men as a godly man who is trusting in Him.

That is how Job is introduced to us, but then something happens that becomes the subject of the whole book.

- This godly man is severely afflicted, and at God's instigation!
 - Satan, the accuser, comes before God and God points Job out to Satan.
 - Obviously, the Lord is pointing out Job to Satan, whose very name means accuser, to single Job out for testing.
 - Satan assures God that if Job is afflicted, Job will turn away.
 - He complains that God had put a hedge of protection around Job, but that if it is taken down, Job will curse God.
 - In verse 10 & 11, Satan says: **"Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!"**
 - Then the LORD gives Satan permission to have at him, but not his person.
 - **Job 1:12: And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.**

So you see then that the stage is set for the godliest man of his day to be severely tested!

- In this way, we have Job as an example for us of two things.
 - First, of how a godly believer responds to affliction.
 - Second, of how affliction helps us to take our place as little children before our mighty God.

Let's begin with the first lesson—

I. Learn from Job how a godly believer responds to affliction.

A. Let's look at how severely Job was tested while Satan was under the restraint of not touching his person.

1. One hammer blow after another came down upon him.
 - He loses his entire estate and all ten of his loving children.
 - And keep in mind as we look at this that it is much harder to have once had these things and to lose them than it is to have never had them at all.
2. Here, I will read to you what happens—it is masterfully told:
 - **Job 1:13-19: Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house; ¹⁴ and a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, ¹⁵ when the Sabeans raided *them* and took them away—indeed they have killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!" ¹⁶ While he *was* still speaking, another also came and said, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them; and I alone have escaped to tell you!" ¹⁷ While he *was* still speaking, another also came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three bands, raided the camels and took them away, yes, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!" ¹⁸ While he *was* still speaking, another also came and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, ¹⁹ and suddenly a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people, and they are dead; and I alone have escaped to tell you!"**

B. How does the godliest man on earth respond to all of these terrible blows?

1. We see that he mourns.
 - Verse 20 says: **Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head...**
 - This is as it should be. Mourning is a good thing to do.
 - The Lord does not wish us to be as stone, but to love all the good things of this life that He has blessed us with—both material things and family.
 - We are reminded of how Jesus wept at the tomb of his friend Lazarus and how the people said, "See how he loved him."
2. But Job does something else that is a wonderful example:
 - Picking up with verse 20 where we left off, it says:
 - **Job 1:20-21: Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. ²¹ And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."**
 - In this, we see that the godly believer recognises that it is up to God to determine his lot in life—All is God's and He can give or take what He pleases.
 - And notice that Job even declares that God's name is blessed!
 - This is the fruit of an evangelical faith—only a true believer can lose his whole estate and his ten children and still see that God is a blessed being.
 - A true believer sees the goodness of God in saving sinners who all deserve to perish forever, and can never sustain doubt of God's love.

- He knows God as his heavenly Father who has given him an eternal inheritance in glory.
 - He does not judge God on the basis of what He does to us in this world, but on the basis of His love to us in Christ.
- Job only knew Christ through the promises of Him—to us He is now revealed—but even the shadowy promise was enough to give Job this remarkable faith.
3. His response is exactly as it should be!
- We do not have to guess as to whether Job has responded properly here or not because the Holy Spirit (who gave us the Bible) tells us in verse 22:
 - **Job 1:22: In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.**
 - Lamentation with absolute resignation to God—resignation that continues to proclaim His goodness in our deepest losses is the right response for us.
 - I do not say that all believers are as mature as Job—he was the godliest man on earth in his day—but this is the response we ought to aspire to have by the grace of the Holy Spirit as those who are in Christ.
 - Our affliction should deepen our love for the precious gospel.
 - One thing to be sure and notice about Job’s response is that even though Satan was the agent who actually took Job’s estate and children away,
 - Job recognises that ultimately it is the LORD who took them away.
 - He doesn’t know what went on between God and Satan as we do,
 - but Job is absolutely correct to recognise that when we receive blessings or when we have them taken away, it is the LORD who has done it...
 - He is the One we are to respond to, because nothing happens apart from His sovereign will.
 - It is a false comfort that some take that God’s power is limited so that some things are done independently of Him.
 - No, Job did not charge God with wrong when He said “the Lord gives and the Lord takes away.” He spoke the truth.
- C. But now round two of affliction comes (even though round one was already a triple hammer blow all by itself).
- This is recorded in chapter 2.
1. The difference with round two is that the restriction to not touch Job’s person is lifted and Satan is only forbidden to take Job’s life.
- a. So as soon as Satan is given this permission, we are told what he did.
- In Job 2:7-8 it says: **So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. 8 And he took for himself a potsherd with which to scrape himself while he sat in the midst of the ashes.**
 - So now on top of all that has just happened, Job’s whole body is racked with pain.
 - We can hardly imagine what Satan, who was trying to make his condition as miserable as possible, must have come up with to torture him!

- b. Job explains later when he is talking about his troubles that he also lost all the honour and respect he used to have in the community.
 - Only days before, aged men would stop to listen to his wisdom...
 - but now he is an object of contempt and disgrace.
 - c. And to add even more to his agony, his wife becomes bitter and tells Job to curse God and die.
 - She has had enough from the LORD.
2. But Job responds even to this, still with an example that is approved by God.
- Look at 2:10 and you can see how he responds to his wife's suggestion that he curse God and die: **But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.**
 - You see that still, Job recognises that we belong to God and that it is up to Him to determine our lot in life.
 - If He wants us to have great blessing in this world or to suffer much, we are His—especially when He has redeemed us.
 - He is the LORD and He is our gracious Father, and it is not ours to question what He does concerning us.
3. Here is the patience of Job—
- Here is a beautiful example of patience in suffering for us to follow.
 - A thing made possible by the Holy Spirit who works in us.
 - Obviously, Job has a lot of love for his Redeemer.
 - What a picture of Christ Job is!

TRANS> Now the story might have stopped right here, but it does not!

- Our gracious LORD wanted to deepen Job's faith—
 - And He wants to deepen ours as we read of Job and as we experience our own sufferings.
 - He wants us to begin to see more and more how great our God is and how small we are... that we might trust Him all more as His little children.

So let's explore this second lesson from the book of Job...

II. Let us see secondly from Job how affliction helps us to see God as we have never seen Him before... to see the great difference between us and Him.

A. At the end of the book, Job himself tells us that he came to know God through this ordeal in ways that he had not known Him before.

1. In chapter 42:1-6, he testifies with these words:
 - **Job 42:1-6: Then Job answered the LORD and said: ² "I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. ³ You asked, 'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. ⁴ Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, 'I will question you, and you shall answer Me.' ⁵ I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. ⁶ Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."**

- This godly man who initially responded to God so beautifully that the Lord Himself says that he did not sin is here saying that he abhors himself and repents in dust and ashes!
 - He is saying that whereas before he had only heard of God, now he sees Him.
 - What he knew about God when he responded so well to his afflictions is nothing compared to what he knows of God now!
- 2. What a splendid thing it is to think that even the man who was so godly that he responded the way he did when affliction first fell on him had room to learn so much more about God!
 - Our God is so much greater than we know, and we are so much smaller than we realise.
 - **Rom 11:33-36: Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable *are* His judgments and His ways past finding out! ³⁴ For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor? ³⁵ Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him? ³⁶ For of Him and through Him and to Him *are* all things, to whom *be* glory forever. Amen.**
 - We have so much more to learn of His glory!
 - So much to learn about what it really means to take our place as little children before our great God with absolute trust!

TRANS> So how did it come about that Job who knew so much of the LORD and trusted Him so well came to learn so much more of Him as to say, “Before I heard about you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you?”

B. It is that Job got pushed by his trials to the breaking point.

1. As the trial went on, he began to weaken.
 - a. We don’t know how long he suffered before his friends came to visit him, but we know that they sat in silence with him for seven days.
 - They are often commended for this because their silence was so much better than their rash words.
 - But surely this was hard for Job to have them sit in silence for seven days as he suffered the grief of all that he lost and the terrible pain in his body.
 - He tells us along the way that at night he wished for the morning and in the morning he wished for the night.
 - b. In chapter 3, he breaks the seven days of silence himself... by cursing the day of his birth and even the one who announced his birth.
 - He only wishes that he had died because now he has no rest.
 - It is understandable that he feels this way, but cursing the day of your birth is not proper—who are we to curse?
 - It was much better of Job before when he said: “the Lord gives and the Lord takes away... blessed be the name of the LORD.”
 - It is God’s prerogative alone to bless and to curse—Job is forgetting that.
 - I say this with fear and trembling, not as one who thinks I would do any better than Job, but as one who is charged with preaching the truth.
 - Cursing his birth was the beginning of the things that Job later repents of.

2. His friends help to push him even more to the breaking point.
 - a. His friends see the wrong in Job cursing his birth, but they react by suggesting that Job must have done something wicked.
 - They assert that because God is both sovereign and just, such terrible things as have come upon Job must show that he has sinned...
 - not just sin in the sense of coming short of what he should be, but sin in the sense of apostasy—of turning away from God—of rejecting God as his God to go his own way.
 - It is the sin that John talks about in 1 John 3:9 that a believer cannot commit...
 - **1 John 3:9: Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.**
 - b. This accusation from Job's three friends is wrong.
 - The LORD tells them at the end of it all that they have not spoken rightly about Job.
 - Their premise that God would not send such things upon a godly man as fell upon Job is simply not true.
 - We know that from the book of Job—we also know it even more from the cross of Christ.
 - They did not have the benefit of either of these examples,
 - yet, still they were wrong to accuse their friend of sin just because trouble had fallen on him.
 - c. And this very assertion of theirs drove Job to say even more inappropriate things than cursing his birth...
 - Now that God's justice has been brought into the picture, Job, knowing that he had not sinned in the sense of rejecting God...
 - eventually starts to say that God has taken away his justice.
 - For example, in Job 19:6-7, he says to his friends who accuse him: **Know then that God has wronged me, and has surrounded me with His net. If I cry out concerning wrong, I am not heard. If I cry aloud, there is no justice.**
 - He questions the LORD as to why He is treating him the way He is and why the wicked are allowed to prosper.
 - He speaks rightly about the fact that there is a coming day of judgment, but he also speaks as if God has done wrong to him.
 - Again, it is understandable that he should speak this way under these hard circumstances,
 - but the way he spoke initially was the way he should have continued to speak.
- But as is often the case under hard trials, there is a wavering in what Job says.
 - He goes back and forth.
 - We hear the flesh complaining, and then we hear the spirit trusting.
3. In fact, some of the most beautiful confessions of faith emerge from his lips in the time of his deepest distress and confusion!

- a. Consider a couple of them...
- 1) There is the confession that his redeemer lives in chapter 19.
 - After complaining that God has wronged him, and that he has lost hope, he then turns his eyes to his eternal hope!
 - In 19:10-11, he says: **He breaks me down on every side, and I am gone; my hope He has uprooted like a tree.** ¹¹ **He has also kindled His wrath against me, and He counts me as one of His enemies.**
 - But then in 19:25-27, he says: **For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth;** ²⁶ **and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God,** ²⁷ **Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!**
 - This one of the clearest testimonies of the hope of the resurrection—and that from a man who lived before Israel was called as a nation.
 - He knows that his Redeemer lives—Job did not offer those sacrifices as the priest of his home for the sins of his family without faith that he had a Redeemer that lived for him to pay for his sin!
 - And he believed that that Redeemer would stand at last on the earth—the longed-for Mediator would come to earth for us.
 - Job believed that even after his body was destroyed, God would raise him up with a new body, and that in that body he would see God.
 - He marvels at the thought—whom I shall see for myself, he says, and my eyes shall behold, and not another... how my heart yearns within me!
 - He yearns for the resurrection and the glorious appearing of the Lord at the last day!
 - How that hope is strengthened in God’s suffering servants, even in their very deepest trials!
 - 2) And then there is the confession in chapter 23 where Job testifies that God will bring him through this trial.
 - Not as a mere survivor, but as one who is greatly enriched!
 - Look at 23:9-10.
 - First, Job explains that he cannot see what God is doing in through all this trouble... **Job 23:9: When He works on the left hand, I cannot behold Him; when He turns to the right hand, I cannot see Him.**
 - But it doesn’t matter that he cannot see what God is doing because he knows that God knows what He is doing and that He has plans for his good and not for his harm...
 - He expresses certainly about God’s plans for him... that God knows what Job’s way entails... verse 10: **But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.**
 - Job is sure that this whole ordeal is going refine him, to make him more pure, like gold.
 - What beautiful faith! What hope in the midst of despair!

- b. One of the best things about trials is that they are breeding grounds for such confessions of faith.
 - In our trails, we search for God with desperation; we search for truth, for answers...
 - And very often we find these answers in marvellous ways.
 - We find God in ways that we had not known of Him before.

TRANS> But remember that mingled with these wonderful confessions of faith, there were also those doubts about God and that complaining about what He had done.

C. Now see what God does to correct Job... to bring him forth as gold as it were.

1. First, he sends a young prophet to him—Elihu.
 - Elihu appears in chapter 32—very much like John the Baptist—to prepare the way of the LORD—as a forerunner.
 - This young man has waited for those older than him to speak, but now he is bursting with words, as one who has perfect knowledge.
 - Some call him arrogant for saying this, but it may be the testimony of one who has the Spirit of God and who speaks by prophecy.
 - It seems to be so because what he says, God Himself says.
 - He rebukes Job’s friends because they have not corrected Job.
 - Their attempts to correct him have failed because of their certainty that Job has sinned—which Elihu does not believe—he tells Job that he wants to justify him (33:32).
 - Again, not that Job is perfect, but that Job is not guilty of sin in the sense of departing from God as his God.
 - Elihu then corrects Job for questioning God and His justice.
 - He speaks of how great God is and how high above us He is.
- It is at this point that something marvellous happens...
2. The LORD Himself appears in a whirlwind to declare to them all of His greatness.
 - a. He rebukes Job for daring to question Him...
 - Look at chapter 38, verse 1, where He begins: **Job 38:1-8: Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said: ² “Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge? ³ Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me. ⁴ Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. ⁵ Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? ⁶ To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, ⁷ when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? ⁸ Or *who* shut in the sea with doors, when it burst forth *and* issued from the womb;...”**
 - He continues in this manner, speaking of His majestic works of creation.
 - He continues this all the way to the end of chapter 39...
 - b. And then in chapter 40,
 - He puts a challenge to Job: **Moreover the LORD answered Job, and said: ² “Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct *Him*? He who rebukes God, let him answer it.”**

- Job realises now how foolish it was for him to question God and replies:
 - **Job 40:4-5: Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth. 5 Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; yes, twice, but I will proceed no further.”**
 - God has brought him to the point where he says: “What was I doing? Who am I to question God?”

c. But the LORD is not satisfied.

1) He loves Job and He wants to deepen Job’s humility even more—He wants Job to grasp yet more the great difference between him and God—between the creature and the Creator.

- This is a lesson that is desperately needed today—
 - It is desperately needed in the world where people reject God because of the trouble He sends to the world...
 - But it is also a lesson that the church needs—even more!
 - We think we are great enough to question God!

2) So what does God do to deepen Job’s humility even more?

- He essentially says, “If you have such wisdom that you can question what I am doing, then you can take a turn judging the world.”

- Look at chapter 40, verse 7 and following:

- **Job 40:7-14: Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me: 8 Would you indeed annul My judgment? Would you condemn Me that you may be justified? 9 Have you an arm like God? Or can you thunder with a voice like His? 10 Then adorn yourself *with* majesty and splendor, and array yourself with glory and beauty. Disperse the rage of your wrath; look on everyone *who is* proud, and humble him. Look on everyone *who is* proud, *and* bring him low; tread down the wicked in their place. Hide them in the dust together, bind their faces in hidden *darkness*. Then I will also confess to you that your own right hand can save you.**

- Who among you is ready to take on the role of humbling the proud and judging the wicked?

- Then who are you to question what God does?
- What arrogance is it that makes you think you can contend with Him?

- Indeed! You cannot even control the great beasts that He has created.

- A couple of creatures that are now extinct but testified of in the ancient world are named—

- one, Behemoth, who is described as a dinosaur, and Leviathan, who fits the description of fire-breathing dragon.

- Modern commentators, being deceived by the long age paradigm, see these as mythological creatures, but there are testimonies from all over the ancient world about such creatures...

- And the LORD here uses these creatures to humble Job as if to say to him, “Who are you to judge me when you can’t even control these creatures that I created to play in my world.”

➤ You see how God is working to humble Job even more.

3. And then we come to that final confession of Job in chapter 42 that we already looked at where Job says:
- **Job 42:5-6: I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. ⁶ Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.**
 - And now you have seen how God brought Job to this wonderful confession.
 - He brought Job to the breaking point, to the point at which Job began to curse his birth and then question the justice of God...
 - He did that so that Job could learn even more than he already knew about his own smallness before the majesty of God!
 - Even though Job knew his place better than probably anyone else in his day and probably better than any of us...
 - God brought him to a much fuller grasp of it.
 - And yes, then He restored Job's estate and even gave him more children.
 - But the greatest thing He did to bring Job forth as gold was to teach him how terribly inappropriate it was for him to question God...
 - The LORD did not simply give Job a command that "You shall not question the justice of the LORD your God,"
 - But He did something far better—He showed Job His greatness so that Job could see how inappropriate it was—and that only God is capable of running the world with justice.

Conclusion: So here in Job we have two great lessons...

- First, the lesson of an example of how one ought to respond to affliction...
 - And second, a revelation of God's glorious majesty that causes you to see how inappropriate it is to question God's justice.
- And my brothers and sisters—just think what we have seen of God's justice... much more was revealed to us with the coming of Christ than was revealed to Job!
 - We have seen that God is so just that the only way we could be saved was by the blood of His Son,
 - and we have seen that He is so loving and gracious that He delivered Him so that we might be saved!