

Hindsight is 20/20

Job: View From The Ashes

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This morning I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to two very distinct places, one of which you are in expectation of, and one probably not so much. Job 42. That's the passage that we've been longing for for weeks and months, but today we're actually going to close our message in Hebrews 11, but the majority of our time today is going to be spent in Job 42. And for those of you that are guests and visitors, I realize that you may be here for the first time, but today we have a very distinct privilege of closing out the story, the book of the Bible, the character that we know is Job, and a man and a name that is synonymous with suffering and pain and anguish and fortitude and faithfulness, but today we get to discover in Job's life what we've known all along. You see, we've had the advantage of chapter 42, but Job has not up until this point, and one of the things that we've learned in life is that hindsight is always 20/20. How many times in our own life have we walked through a scenario, a situation, an event, a struggle, whatever it may be, and you ask this very proverbial yet famous question to God, "Why? Why am I walking through this? Why is there this desert in my life? Why is there this anguish?" But one of the things that we discover is that over the course of time, sometimes it's months, oftentimes it's years and occasionally it can be decades, we're able to look back at that which we thought at the time we had been forsaken by the Lord, we thought at the time he did not hear our prayers, he did not see our situation, but years and decades down the road we're able to look back and with vision that is 20/20, we see exactly how God was moving, how he was operating, and we come to this distinct conclusion that if he had answered our prayers the way we'd wanted to, it probably would have messed up everything.

Today in Job 42, not only do we get to close out this incredible story of this incredible man, but we get to see how Job walked through his latter days. We're going to discover that he came to a very important realization in his life. We're going to discover that whether he believed it was going to happen or not, God brought vindication in his life. And then we're going to see the compensation that God grants him for his faithfulness and his fortitude.

Beginning in verse 1 of chapter 42, it says,

1 Then Job answered the LORD, and said, 2 I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. 3 Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. 4 Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. 5 I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. 6 Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. 7 And it was so, that after the LORD had spoken these words unto Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. 8 Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job. 9 So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the LORD commanded them: the LORD also accepted Job. 10 And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. 11 Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold. 12 So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand female donkeys. 13 He had also seven sons and three daughters. 14 And he called the name of the first, Jemima; and the name of the second, Kezia; and the name of the third, Kerenhappuch. 15 And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren. 16 After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations. 17 So Job died, being old and full of days.

The story ends the way we expected it to because we've had the advantage of hindsight. We've known chapter 42 was there all along but Job never did, and that's what makes his story so impactful, that's what makes his story so impressionable to us is because he did not know about chapter 42, he did not know about the blessings that were going to come, he did not know about the children that would again be a part of his life.

So what is it that Job finally realized? What is the realization that he finally had to come to the conclusion to? And when we look at verse 2 and 3, let me remind you he is still on the ash heap. He still has a bank account with a negative balance. He still has 10 children buried in the graveyard. What does he say? He says, "I know that you can do anything." Now basically what Job is doing is he is proclaiming three very key tenets of orthodox biblical faith, and the first one is this, we call it omnipotence, that God is all-powerful. He

is declaring that in spite of what he's walked through, in spite of his journey, in spite of his struggles, that there is nothing that God cannot do. In other words, God could have taken it from him, God could have made it to where he never walked through it, he's that powerful, but because he's all-powerful, he allowed it to occur.

The second thing, the end of verse 2. He says, "for that no thought can be withholden from thee." There's a fancy theological term and we call it omniscience. Not only is God all-powerful, but he's all-knowing. There is nothing that befell Job that God was not aware of. There is nothing that he said, there's nothing his friends said. In fact, we can go to a greater extent, there's nothing that he thought that God was not completely aware of.

This is an important realization, God is all-powerful, God is all-knowing, and then look at verse 3, "Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge?" Now this is a reference back to chapter 38 when God shows up out of the whirlwind. That's why Job said, "I've heard with my ear, now I see with my eyes." And the Lord says, "Who darkens counsel without wisdom?" In other words, what God was saying is there are events that have taken place you are not privy to. Job was not aware that twice God defended his character to Satan. He was not aware that twice Satan accused him of false worship or at least, shall we say, arrogant selfish worship. What is he saying? God is omnipresent. He is everywhere. Not only was he with Job when the heartache happened, he was in the heavens when the conversation took place.

These are three very important tenants, not only of scripture, but our faith. God is all-powerful, God is all-knowing, God is everywhere. Let me remind you again, he makes these statements before one single "ounce of compensation" is given to him. I want you to see how he responds in verse 6. He says, "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Let me take these first six verses and give you a little bit of "bumper sticker theology." You say, "What's bumper sticker theology?" Let me kind of break it down into a kind of a colloquial phrase that hopefully will resonate in our lives. This is some of the most valuable information that anybody, no matter what age, no matter what stage of life, if you can get what I'm about to share with you, if you can grasp what Job is communicating in these first six verses, then the rest of the chapter can be a reality for you as well. Here it is: there is a God but you are not him. If you can get that, then the following verses can be a picture and a part of your life as well.

I want you to picture it, Job has still got the sores, he's still got the empty bank account, he's still got the dead children, he's still got a crowd gathered around who may or may not believe him, and he says, "God, it doesn't matter what I'm surrounded by. It doesn't matter my feelings. It doesn't matter my environment. You are God and I am not." What Job was willing to do, what very few of us are willing to do is acknowledge that he may never know the answer to the question why. We often know who and how and where and when, but a lot of times God does not give us the privy of knowing why things occur in our life, why struggles occur, why issues, why conflict, whatever it may be, and that's the realization that we need to grasp. He was willing to say, "You are God. I am not. I have not enjoyed, I have not liked, it has not been a pleasure cruise walking through these last months, but that's the privilege of you being God and me not."

So what happens next? Beginning in verse 7, God brings vindication to his life. Now let's be honest, this is what Job's been waiting on for months. This is what we've been waiting on for 35 plus chapters because if you've been reading along, if you've been a part of the study, it's been very clear to us that his friends are in the wrong and Job is in the right. It's not questionable to us. We concede it. It's on every page that we turn. But Job was walking a path that many of us walk. You ever been in one of those situations where you know you're right but nobody else believes it? You ever been in one those situations where you're standing for truth and nobody else seems to acknowledge it? You feel like you're alone on an island. Now I know this may seem unfathomable to you, but as a pastor this happens quite a bit. There are times where standing for truth of God's word puts you on a very lonely island of life when you have a culture, when you have a community, when you have a country who oftentimes pushes against and presses contrary to. For nine "speeches," Job never gave in. He never gave up. He knew who God was. He knew his relationship to him, and he was not going to budge just because the temperature of the air was going contrary to him. He did not know if he would ever get vindicated. I don't know if you've ever been in one of those positions where you know that what you've stated, what you've lived out, whatever it may be, is true though nobody else believes it. Can I share with you something that rarely ever happens? Is when the truth comes out that those who were contrary ever come and apologize. It's rare, is it not? Why? Because those that were in the wrong rarely want to admit that they were wrong.

But what does God do? God does an incredible thing here in verses 7 through 10. He comes to the three friends and he calls him out. He says, "You guys were wrong. Job was right." So what does he ask them to do? He says, "You three need to go out and make a sacrifice. You need to make an offering. You need to offer a sacrifice because you are in error." Notice he doesn't ask Job to do that at all, but can I show you what he asked Job to do? There's this passage in verse 10 tucked in there that you may have never noticed before. It says, "the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends." Now folks, that may be one of the most powerful statements in the entire book of Job. You've got three guys who for multiple chapters, multiple months, they were ruthless, they were wrong and they're riled up everybody around them. They pointed their finger at Job. They raised their voices at Job. They ridiculed, they mocked, they made fun of, and Job was right the whole time.

What does God say? "Job, if you really want things to turn around, you've got to pray for these guys." Woo. There's not an ounce of our flesh that likes anything that's written there in verse 10. God says, "Job, if you really believe that I'm all-powerful, I'm all-knowing and I'm everywhere, and if you really believe what you've said that you are not me and I am not you, then I need you to do what I, God, am asking you to do that you as humanity are probably never going to understand. I need you to pray." Can I speak in southernese? "I need you to pray for these boneheads that have been on the ash heap."

What does he do? He doe it. I'm going to ask a hard question today, this is a question for every one of us. I'm not asking for the raising of hands, the acknowledgment of a verbal response because I think you know the answer deep down inside. Could it be possible

that one of the reasons that you and I don't get the vindication for our lives that we so desire is because we're not willing to do what Job did on behalf of God? Are you willing to pray for those who've hurt you? Are you willing to stand in the gap for those who've lied about you? Are you willing for those who have defamed your character and spoken ill of you, done you wrong and done everything contrary to the truth, are you willing to say, "Alright, God, I'm okay if they're in the right position with you"? Do you know why that's tough? Because it goes against every grain of our flesh. Can I tell you what Job wanted to pray? Hellfire and brimstone. "God, bring it down." And Job said, "Okay. So that's how this is going to work, I'm going to get off the ash heap, this chapter in my life is going to draw to a close, but I'm going to have to suck up my pride. I'm going to humble myself and three men who've done nothing but defame me, hurt me and harm me, I'm going to desire them to be right with God more than for them to say we're sorry for what we did." That's tough, and that's why there's the book of Job. Not only was he faithful, not only did he stand strong in the midst of suffering, he was willing to do what very few of us are willing to do, is as Jesus said, "Are you willing to bless and pray for your enemies?"

So let's look at the conversation. What comes out of this, the latter part of verse 10, it says, "also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before." And you can look at the numbers of the camels and all the different animals as compared to chapter 1. It's exactly as the Bible says, that here was a man who the Lord called the greatest in the east, here was a man who was monetarily and financially prolific and very comfortable, and it says that God blessed him twice as much. Now again, I don't want you to read into this, "Oh, if I just go through the hard times, I get 'material blessings.'" Do not read that into the passage because one of the things that I've learned and this has been spoken to me years ago, sometimes one of the toughest things in life is managing your blessings, right? Sometimes the more we have, the more faith it takes to manage that.

So he's got twice the responsibility, twice the authority, but did you notice when we were reading how God gave him these blessings? What happens? Well, it says there in verse 11 that his brothers, his sisters, a whole community shows up. They go to his house. You see, we're no longer at the ash heap. And what did they do? It says that every one of them actually the word used is "all," and you know what the Hebrew word for "all" means, right? It means all. It says all of them gave him money. All of them gave him an earring of gold. You see, Job had great private wealth in chapter 1. Now can we agree he's got community wealth? In fact, it says that everybody, or as some of you like to hear, everybody showed up. You know who these people are? These are the ones who criticized him. These are the ones who mocked him. These are the ones that made fun of him. These are the ones that they went home at night and over a supper they talked to their spouse about who does that Job think he is.

You know there's a parallel story to this. It's going to happen in a few years chronologically. The people of God, the Israelites, they're going to find themselves in Egypt for over 400 years. Think about that, there's nobody in the Jewish lineage at this time when Moses comes around, there's nobody that knows anybody who knows anybody that can tell you what it's like to walk in freedom. Everybody knows nothing but

slavery and bondage. So what does the Lord do? He miraculously liberates and vindicates his people. I mean, it's kind of like Job 38. God shows up out in a whirlwind speaking to Job, in the book of Exodus he shows up by turning water into blood, flies, boils, darkness and that final plague, what we call the Passover, the death of the firstborn. Remember that famous Passover meal that's talked about in Exodus 12, the Lord said, "Eat standing up, eat with your shoes on, for when I call, you need to be ready to go." And as they ate that meal, and as they celebrated God's goodness and his grace, as they're preparing to go across the Red Sea, you remember what the Egyptians did? The Egyptians all brought them money. The Egyptians brought them the gold. Unfortunately, when they get in the wilderness, remember they create the golden calf? You say, "Where did they get all that gold?" The Egyptians.

But if you go back and read the story, the Egyptians didn't give it out of good riddance, get outta here, do you know what the Egyptians realized? That the God of the Israelites is the one true God, and when we have that realization and when God brings vindication, do you know what we tend to do? We tend to respond the same way. Abraham did this with Melchizedek in Genesis 14. He wins a battle he had no business winning so what does he do? He gives Melchizedek 10%. There was no "law," there was no commandment. The word tithe hadn't even been mentioned in the Bible yet. He just said, "You know what? God acted on my behalf as he should have and as I never thought he would and I think I'm just going to give a little back." That's exactly what happens here. Job had twice as much because God not only worked in his heart, his three friends' hearts, he had worked in the hearts of everybody in that community that realized they had lied, cheated, and stolen from Job, if not financially at least by way of his reputation.

But there's one last bit of compensation. I want you, particularly those of us that are "adults" to put yourself in this position. You're in your McMansion because obviously a great man would have had a large home. You're surrounded by the entire community. Your bank account is now twice as large as it's ever been. You're holding, shall we say, your flocks are twice as vast as ever. Your health has been restored and you've had the best meal you've had in years in the last few moments. There's none of us in that position that would have been completely satisfied, are we? Because when he looked out the window to his house, there still would have been 10 tombstones. Give all the money that the world has, give all of the vindication feasible, but those 10 tombstones would have weighed so heavy on his heart. It's probably the one thing that if God had asked, he would have exchanged, "Just give me the kids back and you can keep the rest."

So what happens? The Lord brings 10 children in his life. Now let me share with you something that's very interesting. He has the same number of children and the exact same number of gender. Chapter 1, there are seven boys and three girls. Here in chapter 42, there are seven boys and three girls. It is a little bit different because the girls are actually named specifically in chapter 42. And there's a lot of discussion on how did God do this. There are actually three different views. I want to walk through all three of them and then draw the entire story to hopefully a rightful conclusion.

View number 1 is that Job and his wife of his youth, the one who had been married to and by the way in chapter 25 and 26 that he was still, she was still his wife, that they had 10 more children. You do realize in chapter 1 his children were all grown adults, right? Can we all concur that that would be a miracle if God not only allowed her the ability to have the 10 children, but the willingness to do it, all right? So that's theory number 1, that his wife of all these years, much like Abraham and Sarah except it's not just Isaac, it's "times 10."

View 2 is that the Lord brought double-fold of everything and then because of chapter 2 in the conversations with his wife, that the Lord brought Job a new wife into his life that then bore these 10 children. Nothing wrong with this view except for the fact that there's nobody else mentioned. There's no wife of the youth. There's no new wife. And can we just all agree it's somewhat an anomaly that if he had a new wife that they have 10 more children all of the same gender as he did with the first wife. But again, it's possible, but it also would be miraculous. You say, "Why would it be miraculous?" You do know what Job went through, who wants to marry that? I mean, because, you know, there's always you know, round two around the corner, right?

So the first view is miraculous that they could even have the children, the second view is miraculous just because of the sociology of the situation. Then there's the third view. There actually the idea that Job's 10 children, same number, same gender, were actually raised from the dead. Now I want to close this entire series by going to Hebrews 11. Hebrews 11. We're going to begin in verse 17. It's the story of humanity's history of faith. Abraham and Sarah were told by God, "Even though you're great in age, you're going to have a child of promise. His name is going to be Isaac." Please understand that Abraham is roughly 90 years of age when all this takes place, so he is significantly older than the childbearing years and so is his wife. This child by the name of Isaac is born and when he's a young man, when he's a teenager, in Genesis 22 God instructs him to take his son on a mountain and to sacrifice him. I want to read the abbreviated version in verses 17 through 19 of Hebrews 11. It says, "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called." Listen to verse 19, "Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead." I want you to notice what it said. He believed that if this is how it's going to go down that God is able. Now I don't know and I cannot conclude to you how these 10 children came back into Job's life, were they new, were they raised. I don't know, but I can make you a promise, Job believed that God was able. He believed God was able. Abraham believed that God was able. Lazarus, his sisters, in the gospel of John said, "Jesus, if you had been here, this wouldn't be the problem." You see this pattern from time beginning.

I want to close the story, the person of Job with this one very important thought. Why did you get up this morning and come here? That sounds like a dumb question. I realize that but work with me. Why did you get up? Why did your family fight? I know you do. It's part of it. Why did you, you know, leave late, speed fast, get here, try to fight for a parking place? Why did you show up this morning? Why did you, of all the places, why are you here this morning? Do you know why? Because 2,000 years ago you believed

that Jesus rose from the dead, and it wasn't just that he was able to, you believe he did. And if Jesus Christ rose from the dead, then there's nothing else we'll face that he's not able to do as well. It doesn't matter the struggle. It doesn't matter the problem. The reason that Job is so impactful is because there is the possibility that those 10 kids came back up from the dead. And what does that do? It gives us hope. It gives us hope that our dreams that are dead could raise again. It gives us hope that things that seem completely broken never to be mended can somehow be reconciled again. And finally it says, if Jesus Christ rose from the dead so we could be forgiven of our sins, then there is nothing else that God is not able to do in our lives. If Jesus Christ rose from the dead, then you and I now have the ability to sit on the proverbial ash heap of life as Job and walk through whatever he walked through because we don't have to come from the perspective he's able, we know he's already accomplished.

Let's pray with their heads bowed and our eyes closed. Maybe this morning, whether in person or online, you're that individual that the Spirit of God took the word of God, and really it just resonated and today you realize that all the struggle, all the heartache, all the difficulties, that in hindsight, God was using all that to get you to this point, this point in your life where you would realize that there is a God and you are not him, to get you to this point in your life where you would believe in a risen Savior named Jesus Christ who's able to forgive you of your sins, to save your soul and to destine you for an eternity the Bible calls heaven. The Bible says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. It doesn't say whoever joins a church, whoever starts this, stops that, passes a test or completes a course. It says whoever calls on the name of the word, maybe today's the day that finally in hindsight God has been orchestrating everything to this very moment. Let me remind you, calling on the name of the Lord isn't about repeating a script, it's not about a certain amount of words in a certain order, this is your heart's cry. Maybe your heart's cry would go a little something like this. "God, today, God, I just want to go on the record that you're God and I'm not. Your ways are not my ways. Your thoughts are not my thoughts. God, I can't fathom that you would love me so much that you would send Jesus on my behalf. God, I cannot fathom that you love me so much that Jesus Christ would reject all temptations, all ideologies of this world on behalf of me. God, I cannot fathom that you were willing to allow yourself to be crucified to a cruel cross and eventually raised from the grave three days later. God, I cannot fathom your love for me. But God, I believe it and you said that if I called upon you, you would forgive me, and you would save me. And so God, today the best way I know how I want you to know I believe that Jesus is the answer to my sin problem. The best way I know how, God, I'm asking you to forgive me. I'm asking you to save me. God, I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed, our eyes still closed. You know, maybe you're that person today, no matter what stage or age in life, has finally said, "Do you know what? It's time to believe in Jesus." In a moment, I'm going to pray for us, we're going to stand and sing and then you have the privilege of just stepping out and stepping forward. We've got a team set aside, we've got a room set aside, we would love just to hear your story, just to pray with you, pray for you, and maybe it's not a decision for salvation, maybe it's like the young lady today, you need to follow in believers' baptism, or maybe you're that

individual, that couple, that family, that said, "This is our spiritual home." Or maybe you just are walking through something and you need somebody to pray with you and pray for you. Whatever it is, we'd love the privilege of ministering unto you.

Heavenly Father, as we come to this time of decision, God, thank you for chapter 42. God, thank you for Hebrews 11:19 that we have in your word the confidence that you are able not just to raise the dead but, God, you have done so in the person of Jesus Christ. God, help us today to hear what you've spoken to us and to respond appropriately. It is the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.