

The Restoration of Job

Job 42

We are going to finish our sermon series through the book of Job this morning, so let me invite your attention to the final chapter, Job 42.

We have crammed 42 chapters into a modest 9 weeks in this series so, I'm sure you now have a perfect grasp of a theology of suffering and evil under the sovereign hand of God, right?

No, of course not, but hopefully this series has given a little bit more guidance to what it means to follow God and endure suffering in the meantime. As is always true with Scripture, there is much more that could be mined and discovered in this book, so we want to encourage your continued study of this important portion of Scripture.

But to review, Job was a righteous man who loved God and served God. Satan approaches God and God points out Job as this man who walks upright, but Satan says to God...and this is important to grasp for the conclusion of Job...

Job 1:9-11

9 Then Satan answered the Lord and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason? **10** Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. **11** But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face."

In other words, "Of course Job follows you! You've protected him. Take away all of his material blessings and my guess is, he will curse you."

God allows Job to suffer by way of losing his wealth, allowing his children to die, and finally allowing him to endure terrible physical suffering.

From there three friends come with the intention of comforting Job, but they do the opposite, they heap more suffering on him which we will talk a bit more about in a minute, but eventually God responds to the situation.

He comes to Job and questions his wisdom of the situation, but ultimately reminds Job that he is sovereign over everything which includes evil and suffering.

Last week we read the beginning of chapter 42, but let's look at it one more time...

Job 42:1-6

1 Then Job answered the Lord and said: **2** "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. **3** 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. **4** 'Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you make it known to me.' **5** I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; **6** therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

So, Job responds to God, "You're right. Ultimately, I don't understand, but you do. I repent of my careless words and attitude."

Now, the rest of the final chapter gives us two important scenes in the conclusion: In the first scene (v. 7-9), the three friends of Job come back on the scene and there is an interaction between God, Job, and the friends.

In the second scene (v. 10-17), we get a quick summary of the rest of Job's life after what is no doubt the most difficult and painful season that Job could imagine.

Both scenes bring up some important questions as we learn from the life of Job, so let's walk through these two scenes, and then at the end, I want to give some final conclusions as we close our time in the book of Job.

1st scene (42:7-9)

Job 42:7-9

7 After the Lord had spoken these words to Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite: "My anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. **8** Now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves. And my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly. For you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has." **9** So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did what the Lord had told them, and the Lord accepted Job's prayer.

So, again, the three friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar) are back. If you aren't familiar who they are, they are a significant part of the book of Job, because from the end of chapter 2 through chapter 31 records this conversation or debate really between the friends who said they came to comfort him but in reality just heaped condemnation and

more pain on him. For nearly 30 chapters of the book, the friends are diagnosing Job's situation, and Job replying that they have it all wrong.

They were guided by what is called retribution theology. It says: Sinners suffer, you are suffering, therefore you are a sinner. Your sin has brought this on you. If you want relief, then you need to repent.

Now, after God and Job's interaction, God speaks to Eliphaz who is acting as a representative of the three and says, you guys have been wrong. You've spoken incorrectly about me, about Job's character, and about his situation. And maybe most surprisingly, God says, you haven't spoken right about me, **as Job has.**

And that raises a big question, right? **Why did God accept Job's words and not the friends?** We kind of understand why he'd be upset about the friends. They put forth a picture of life that wasn't accurate. Instead of comforting their friend, they made things worse.

God's conclusion about the friends is understandable, but what about Job? Because again, for several chapters, Job was not completely righteous with his lips. He was angry at God. He was questioning God's justice, goodness, and care. He wanted to take God to court, so to speak, so he could plead his case to him. Again, Job really wasn't perfect in his speech about God, and yet, here's God saying to the friends, "I don't like your words, but I do like Job's words." Why?

Most likely, we should take God's assessment of Job's speech to include his repentance. In other words, we should probably assume that what God is referring to is all of Job's words in the book, including what he says at the beginning of chapter 42. Job says, "I've talked about things I don't understand, so I'm sorry," and God says, "That is good speech. Those are true words."

So, Job has repented already, now God looks at these friends and says, "Now it's your turn. Now you need to repent like my servant Job." And notice the incredible grace here shown by God. God is the one who initiates with instruction for sacrifice. Even though God comes and says that his anger is burning at them, he doesn't come with immediate judgment, he comes with an eye towards reconciliation. So, he tells them to make a sacrifice.

But, to make this even more interesting, God instructs Job to be the intercessor for the friends. Catch the incredible irony here. For most of the book, the friends are coming down on Job telling him he needs to repent and now they are the ones in need of repentance and intercession by, of all people, Job.

So, they do what God says, they are reconciled back to God and Job is reconciled back to his friends.

2nd scene (42:10-17)

Job 42:10-17

10 And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job, when he had prayed for his friends. And the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. **11** Then came to him all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before, and ate bread with him in his house. And they showed him sympathy and comforted him for all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him. And each of them gave him a piece of money and a ring of gold.

12 And the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning. And he had 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 yoke of oxen, and 1,000 female donkeys. **13** He had also seven sons and three daughters. **14** And he called the name of the first daughter Jemimah, and the name of the second Keziah, and the name of the third Keren-happuch. **15** And in all the land there were no women so beautiful as Job's daughters. And their father gave them an inheritance among their brothers. **16** And after this Job lived 140 years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, four generations. **17** And Job died, an old man, and full of days.

So, Job intercedes for his friends and things begin to turn around for Job. So much so, that the text says that God doubles the fortunes he had before. He has twice as many sheep, camels, oxen, and donkeys. He has new children. And we can surely assume that his physical ailments went away seeing that Job lived 140 years, dying as an old man, full of days.

As nice as this conclusion is, it brings up some questions too, doesn't it? I think the biggest question is, **"Does this prove retribution theology?"**

Again retribution theology is the theology the friends and Job held. It says that sin produces suffering, and righteousness produces prosperity. If you are suffering you just need to repent and then you will prosper again.

Because it seems like things all turn around when Job repents, so could the friends have been right? Well, no because God has just rebuked them. But still, this seems like what they held was true. So, what should we think about this? Does Job's ending prove retribution theology?

No, for a few reasons:

First, remember that Job's repentance was not about some sin that brought about his suffering, but his sin in the midst of his suffering. That's key. Again, he didn't walk through suffering because he did something to deserve it. He repents because of his attitude and words during the suffering.

Second, Job's restoration is connected to his intercession, not his repentance. That is what verse 10 says. It is when he intercedes for his friends that God begins to restore his fortunes.

Third, God actually never promises and tells Job that he will restore his fortunes. Job doesn't repent and intercede because he was expecting anything material in return, he does it out of obedience and worship.

And that point is so important to grasp. Because it is the answer to the key question of this book, the question that Satan asks God in chapter 1...

Job 1:9

"Does Job fear God for no reason?"

Satan's accusation is that Job only follows God because of the gifts he has received. But here in chapter 42, finally we see Job following God not because of any of God's gifts, but because of God himself. Job, then, 41 chapters later, has passed the test fully and completely.

One other important detail to note in these final verses is the way that the text speaks to Job's new daughters. They are given more attention than the sons. Their names are included and in verse 15, we read...

Job 42:15

And in all the land there were no women so beautiful as Job's daughters. And their father gave them an inheritance among their brothers.

The fact that Job gives them an inheritance is an important detail here, because traditionally daughters didn't receive an inheritance. In fact, Numbers 27 says that the only time a daughter would get an inheritance was if there were no sons. So, why does Job do that here?

Well, I think we can see something important about Job's growing understanding of life up to this point. His daughters probably would have had no problem finding husbands who could provide for them, but Job understands now better than ever, that tragedy strikes families sometimes. What would happen if their future husbands die and they are left as widows? Job decides to provide for them.

Again, Job has grown in his understanding of life and suffering, and tragedy. He's grown to understand that sometimes the innocent really do suffer. Even if you follow the Lord, even if you are as righteous as you can be, and even if you regularly repent of any known sin in your life, even then suffering can happen.

More could be said, but let me leave us with some final thoughts on Job. Here are **Six Big Lessons from Job, we shouldn't miss:**

1. We shouldn't attribute our suffering to a change in God's character.

Again, this was Job's belief before God confronts him. And we might be tempted to think the same. When we walk through seasons of pain and trials and suffering, it will be tempting to think that perhaps what we've always believed about God isn't true anymore. Maybe He's not in control anymore, maybe he doesn't love us anymore, maybe he is unaware of what's happening, or maybe he simply doesn't care.

Job's life is given to us to remind us that simply isn't true. Suffering as a righteous follower of Christ does not mean that God is anything less than the loving, all-powerful, Shepherd that he claims to be.

2. We shouldn't automatically attribute our suffering to hidden sin in our lives.

This was the friends' belief. Job must have sinned to deserve the kind of suffering he was experiencing. Now, discipline from the Lord is real. The author of Hebrews points this out in Hebrews chapter 12, that God does discipline his children like any good father who wants the best for his sons and daughters. Discipline is real, so it's good to reflect on your life and heart in times of difficulty, seek out if there is any known sin you need to put to death and turn away from, but suffering isn't always about your sin, as Job's life shows.

3. God sometimes confirms our saving faith by forcing us to hold on to him when we have every reason to give up on him.

One of the effects of suffering is that it reveals the true nature of our faith. Again, Satan wanted to test Job to see if his faith was genuine. Did he love the Lord because he is the Lord or because he had given Job good gifts? As we suffer and some of those good gifts are stripped away, our faith is exposed too.

Suffering causes us to ask, "Is Jesus enough when he is all I have?" Or will you walk away because you came for the wrong reasons? Maybe you initially found Jesus as useful. He could serve some purpose for you. You thought if I follow him my life will be

easier. Maybe you were told that if you have faith then God will grant you wealth and health. Maybe you thought you would gain some kind of social clout with some group because you claimed Christianity.

All of those wrong motivations will be revealed when things don't go as expected. When relationships fail. When health fails. When financial burdens arise. When persecution comes. The same question will be asked of us as Satan asked of Job, "Do you follow God for no good reason?"

Well, we should follow God for a good reason, but those reasons aren't because of the material gifts we may or may not receive but because we receive God himself. Knowing we have been separated from God because of our sin, we turn to Christ who has made a way for us to be reconciled back to him. So, yes we receive good gifts, like forgiveness, adoption, justification, relationship, security, and much more, but ultimately we come to Jesus because we get Jesus! And despite what losses we might experience in this life, we know we will never lose him.

4. We don't receive an exact explanation from God for our own times of suffering, *other than biblical promises.*

Notice in the book of Job, God never gives an explanation to Job about why has suffered so much. We have the benefit of reading the opening chapters to see what's going on there, but Job never got that.

The same will be true in our suffering. We don't always get the exact reasoning for each and every situation that we walk through, *other than biblical promises.*

SO, you better get to know God's promises!

ILLUS. When you fly somewhere, after everyone is seated, the crew goes through the same speech about the aircraft and the safety procedures. It happens every time you fly. There isn't a flight where they say, you *probably* know this, so we will skip it this time around. The reason they do they are required to that is because those instructions are incredibly important in the case of a real emergency, and it is better to know them before the emergency than trying to learn in the middle of the emergency.

It is much better to know how oxygen masks work, that even though they don't inflate oxygen is flowing, that you should put yours on before helping someone else, and so on. It's better to know that before the emergency than in the middle of it.

The same is true for us as we face potential times of suffering. It is better to know the promises of God beforehand than frantically try to catch up when you're in the middle

of difficult circumstances. Now, those times can certainly aid in your learning, it will force you to get into Scripture and spend time in prayer, but how much better prepared will you be if you've grown in your understanding of the Lord and his word before those times?

Don't wait for the emergency before you get to know the Lord better. Commit yourself to anchor your heart to the promises of God in Christ beforehand and you will be better equipped to walk through the trials that sneak up on you.

5. Jesus was the ultimate innocent sufferer whose suffering brings sacrifice and intercession for those of us who recognize our sin.

Notice the picture of Christ in the book of Job. Job, the innocent sufferer, intercedes for his friends. Jesus, on the other hand, is the truly innocent sufferer, who experienced the wrath of God on the sins of the world at the cross. Jesus was both the priest who intermediated between man and God and he was the sacrifice himself to bring about reconciliation.

Don't miss the beautiful ways this book points to person and work of Christ.

6. Even if a Job-like restoration doesn't come in this life, in Christ, you have more than you can see now and you will have more than you could hope in the age to come.

As we finish the life of Job and try to learn a bit more about suffering, we might be tempted to think that the Lord will do the same in our lives as he did with Job. But, we can't assume God will bring about this kind of restoration in our lives like Job. Obedience can be rewarded, but this hope and expectation have the danger of reducing our relationship with God to something transactional, like the pulling of the arm of a slot machine, we are good so we can get good things. Again, there is no guarantee in Scripture that life in this age will be materially prosperous simply because we follow Christ.

But that doesn't mean we don't have anything in Christ worth rejoicing over.

I read a great article this week that helped explain the relationship between our circumstances and our joy or happiness. In it the author gives a helpful visual, I think.

To summarize, imagine that you are at the center of a circle, and surrounding you in that circle are various situations or circumstances you face in daily life. For example, on

that circle is a full night of good rest, you've woken up refreshed and feeling good. Also, on that circle is a job promotion, you've been recognized and rewarded for your hard work. And, then you find out your child has won an award at school for their achievements. How will you likely respond to those circumstances? With happiness, right? And by the way, that is true whether you are a Christian or not a Christian.

Now, imagine those circumstances differently. Surrounding you instead is a sleepless night, you've woken exhausted and unmotivated. Instead of a promotion, you've been laid off. Your child hasn't won an award, instead, they've won a few days off of school because of a suspension. How will you likely respond to those circumstances? With discouragement, frustration, fear, anxiety, and so on. And by the way, that is likely true whether you are a Christian or not a Christian.

The difference though for the Christian is that beyond that immediate circle of pressing circumstances, is another greater circle lined by greater realities. Realities such as a wise, loving, sovereign God watching over and guiding every single step of your life. Realities such as a coming day when Jesus comes again to make all things new, wiping away every tear, and fully and finally defeating sin, Satan, and death for all eternity. Realities such as having the record of our debt against a holy God completely removed because of the work of Christ on the cross which means our standing before God is eternally secure.

And so the aim of the Christian in this age, surrounded by immediate things that can vacillate between joy-inducing or grief-inducing is to train our hearts to see past those to the greater realities given to us in Christ.

As one writer said, "The gospel is one great permanent circumstance in which I live and move; and every hardship in my life is allowed by God only because it serves his gospel purposes in me."

So, while we may not experience any kind of material restoration like Job, we have a future guaranteed restoration in the new heavens and new earth.

Revelation 21:1-5

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. **2** And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. **3** And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. **4** He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." **5** And he who was seated on the throne said,

“Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

In fact, hope in this future reality as a means for enduring the hardships of this age is what Jesus pointed to those whom he called out to follow him...

Matthew 19:29

And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.

CONFESSION

So, as we wrap up this series through Job, as Christians, let's set our hearts and eyes on Jesus, the innocent sufferer who has interceded for us to bring about total restoration. Let's walk through suffering with hearts anchored in the truths of God's character and work in the gospel. And let's remember God's complete sovereignty over evil and suffering.

If you are not a Christian this morning, let me encourage you to find in Jesus the hope that you've likely searched for, especially in moments of trials and pain. Jesus welcomes you this morning and invites you to turn from your sin and put your faith in him.

Let's spend a few moments in silent prayer and confession...

PRAYER

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Romans 8:28

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Let's stand and continue in worship this morning...

VERSES

Job 1:9-11

Job 42:1-6
Job 42:7-9
Job 42:10-17
Job 1:9
Job 42:15
Revelation 21:1-5
Matthew 19:29
Romans 8:28

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What lingering questions do you have concerning the life of Job?
2. In what ways is Job a picture of Jesus?
3. Why do you think God doesn't give us the exact reasons for each of our trials?
4. What biblical promises have been precious to you through the course of your life?
5. What does it mean that the "gospel is one great permanent circumstance"?