

THE LESSONS OF JOB
(SUNDAY, AUGUST 4, 2019)

Scripture Reading: 10 Commandments; Job 42

INTRODUCTION

The Book of Job like every book in Scripture is both understandable in its basic message and also very rich and deep, such that we could spend years mining all the treasures it contains.

A church member reminded me of one of the great Puritan preachers, Joseph Caryl, who preached 424 sermons on the book of Job.

Amazingly, his congregation lived and flourished during this time, because Caryl did not preach 424 straight sermons from Job.

He preached about 18 sermons a year, one or two a month in alternating fashion.¹

Sometimes when you are studying a book of the Bible, one of the best things to do is to see the end of the book.

As I stated earlier there are aspects of Job that are very challenging.

It is in the final chapter that we can learn much about the overall story of Job.

We will focus our attention on the final chapter as we continue to think of the theme of God's Sovereignty and His eternal plan and what that means for our own lives.

Here is a central point.

We don't always understand how God is working in our lives, especially through trials.

Because of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, you can always trust in our faithful God.

1) OVERVIEW OF JOB

The book of Job has some challenging aspects, but the overall story and outline are not difficult to understand.

Last week we looked at chapters 1 and 2.

¹ Alfred Place Baptist Church has a great article.

<http://www.alfredplacechurch.org.uk/index.php/sermons/job-2/11-the-book-of-job-1-an-introduction/>

At the end of chapter 2, Job is visited by some of his friends. Three are named: Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar.

Eliphaz the Temanite – Teman could be an important city in Edom.

Bildad the Shuhite. Shuah was a son of Abraham and his wife Keturah.

Zophar the Naamathite – The sister of Tubal Cain was named Naamah. Some suggest Zophar was from Edom or Arabia.

Just as Job was a very important man so these three men were likely also men who were well known where they lived.²

What follows are three cycles of debate between Job and his friends.

The first cycle is Job 3-14.

Job speaks first, then Eliphaz.

Job then responds to Eliphaz.

Next Bildad speaks.

Job responds to Bildad.

Then Zophar speaks.

And then finally in three chapters Job responds to all of his friends.

The other two cycles in chapters 15-21 and chapters 22-31 are similar, except that Zophar doesn't speak for a third time.

Then a new character enters the account in Job 32.

A younger man named Elihu speaks in chapters 32-37.

There is question and debate about what Elihu says. Is he merely repeating what the three other friends have said?

Likely this is not the case for at least two reasons.

First, Job does not respond directly to Elihu.

Second, in Job 42, Elihu is not mentioned by God in terms of judgment like the three other friends.

The sixth and key part of the book of Job is found in chapters 38-41.

² ESV Study Bible and MacArthur Study Bible.

In these chapters, the LORD in a mighty storm or whirlwind comes to speak to Job.

Then the final chapter, Job 42, helps us understand the overall purpose of God and the message of this deep book.

One of the central messages of the book of Job is that **man cannot be the standard for judging God.**

But this is the natural position for rebellious men and women.

We want to evaluate God's purposes by our own standard.

There are at least two ways this can be done.

One way is to think we know why God is working in a particular way just based on our own wisdom.

This was the failure of Job's three friends.

In seeing all the difficulties that Job faced, the basic message of His friends was Job you are in sin; this is why you are suffering.

Bildad in Job 8:3-4 asks several questions that capture part of the message of Job's friends.

Job 8:3 Does God subvert judgment? Or does the Almighty pervert justice? [No]

4 If your sons have sinned against Him, He has cast them away for their transgression. [Not the case here]

Later in Job 11:14-15 Zophar speaks:

Job 11:14 If iniquity *were* in your hand, *and you* put it far away, And would not let wickedness dwell in your tents;

15 Then surely you could lift up your face without spot; Yes, you could be steadfast, and not fear;

The second way we question God is to think God is treating us unfairly or not giving us what we think we deserve.

I had a brief interaction with a former student on Facebook concerning the book of Job.

Sadly, his understanding of Job was entirely man-centered.

He understood the book of Job to merely be a competition between Satan and the Lord.

This thinking sadly is typical not just about the book of Job but all aspects of life.

Rushdoony at the end of his book *By What Standard* writes about the Scottish writer and theatre critic William Archer.

According to Archer, World War 1 proved that there could be no god. If there were a God, there could be no war.³

Hasn't something like this been said by countless other people famous and totally unknown?

It is natural that we want to judge God's actions based on our own feelings or ideas.

So, there are sometimes pious and very rebellious ways where God's sovereignty is either challenged or misunderstood.

Let us look at Job 42 now.

2) JOB 42 – JOB'S REPENTANCE AND RESTORATION

In verses 1-6 Job speaks his final words in this great book.

They are words of faith, confession, and repentance.

Job as we know did not suffer directly as the result of a particular sin.

And we also know that not all the trials and challenges we face are because we are guilty of some particular sin.

And yet it is often the case in the midst of being tested, we do not accept God's sovereign work as we should.

Who handles every trial without failure or sin?

None of us.

So, although we don't say all suffering is the direct result of sin, we must always live a life of submission and willingness to confess our sin before the Lord.

In verses 3 and 4 Job speaks of questions that the LORD had brought to Job that we see in chapters 38:2-3 and 40:7.

³ R. J. Rushdoony, *By What Standard*, 190. See also:
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Archer_\(critic\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Archer_(critic))

Job was a faithful man a true believer and yet he also stood guilty before the LORD in terms of pride, presumption about God's purposes, and that Job had to answer God not the other way around.

My friends, we tend to think too highly of ourselves in terms of our ability to handle the trials that God sets before us.

We also can be very quick to see failure in the lives of others and very slow to see our own failings during times of difficulty.

May the Lord by His grace make us quick to confess our own sin and failings before the Lord, especially in the midst of his work of pruning or chastising us.

Listen to John 15:1-2.

John 15:1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. **2** Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and **every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.**

Listen also to the familiar words of Hebrews 12:4-6.

Heb. 12:4 You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. **5** And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons:

*"My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD,
Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;*

6 *For whom the LORD loves He chastens,
And scourges every son whom He receives."*

At the beginning of the book of Job we have this testimony to Job.

Job 1:1 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.

This was all of God's grace to Job we can say.

And here in Job 42:6 we see God's grace in Job's life in his confession before the LORD.

Job 42:6 Therefore I abhor *myself*, And repent in dust and ashes."

John MacArthur notes:

Job did not need to repent of some sins which Satan or his accusers had raised. But Job had exercised presumption and allegations of unfairness against his Lord and hated himself for this in a way that called for brokenness and contrition.⁴

We should observe here that Job is brought to repentance still in a state of great suffering before the LORD.

But Job by God's grace had been brought to a place of even greater humility and recognition of God's sovereignty and majesty.

Nothing that took place in this entire account had been in vain for Job and even more for all of God's people throughout history that have been blessed and encouraged by this book.

In verses 7-9, we see that the Lord brought an even stronger rebuke against Job's three friends.

"My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me *what is right*, as My servant Job *has*..."

Job's friends were guilty of misapplying the doctrine of God's sovereignty in the case of Job.

It was a very serious thing which they did in viewing the situation according to their own reasoning.

This does not mean, of course, that everything that they said recorded in the book of Job was wrong. But they had made wrong statements about God and had made false accusations against Job.⁵

There is something similar to this in the case of the Apostle Paul and the book of 2 Corinthians.

Paul's opponents tried to argue that Paul suffered too much to be a true, Spirit-filled apostle.

I find this so amazing, but it again reveals how easy it is for us to set ourselves as the standard.

Job's friends were required to offer an ascension offering or as it is often translated a burnt offering.

⁴ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, Accordance electronic ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2013), paragraph 8932.

⁵ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, Accordance electronic ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2013), paragraph 8934.

This is the most basic offering that is described in Leviticus 1 as an offering that is given because of sin and shows what all sin deserves and yet God is gracious in accepting a substitute.

What is also interesting from verse 8 is that God speaks that Job will serve almost in the role of a mediator.

My servant Job shall pray for you.

For I will accept him, lest I deal with you according to your folly.

There are two points to consider here.

First, the language here shows Job as a type of a priest.

Obviously, God instituted the Levitical priesthood and the line of Aaron.

God did raise up other men who were priests before the LORD like Melchizedek.

Job also as we see in chapter 1 and this final chapter also served as a priest before the LORD.

We also have in these verses a sense of God's humor and His vindication.

David Clines in the *New Bible Commentary* wrote:

In this charmingly ironic scene Yahweh stresses to the friends that it is Job, and not they, who have truly been *my servant* (repeated four times!) and that it is Job, and not they, who has *spoken of me what is right* (7). It is an almost comic reversal of roles when punishment for the friends' folly is only turned aside by the prayer of the righteous and still suffering Job (8-9). Those who had felt so superior to Job are the ones who stand in need of forgiveness themselves; and Job is not only vindicated before them but becomes their champion.⁶

Verse 9 shows us importantly that Job's friends also repented and followed the clear instruction of the LORD.

Last week I cited a very important verse from James dealing with the book of Job.

There are many challenging aspects of the book of Job, but James helps us see the central theme of this book.

⁶ David J.A. Clines, *Job*, New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition; ed. D. A Carson et al.; Accordance electronic ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 483.

James 5:11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end *intended by* the Lord – that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

a) Perseverance

b) The Lord is very compassionate and merciful

How did James get this idea of the Lord's compassion and mercy?

I think we can say that James read and studied the book carefully, especially Job 42.

The LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning!

Without downplaying anything that he endured in his time of suffering, we can say that the Lord brought a perfect restoration to him.

Now we know that Scripture doesn't promise that every loss here on earth will be restored double as it was for Job.

However, we have been given promises that are even greater.

2 Cor. 4:17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, **18** while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

PREPARATION FOR COMMUNION

Because of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, you can always trust in our faithful God.

Before we come to the Lord's Table I want to share one of the most famous passages in the book of Job.

What is one of the most beautiful testimonies in all the book of Job?

I would think Job 19:25-26 would have to rank at the top.

You might not know these verses by reference, but I am sure you are familiar with them.

Job 19:25 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,

One of the precious doctrines that we believe is that the saints of old were saved by grace through faith just as saints of today are saved.

Now we do believe that through time God gave more and more light and revelation.

What was not always so clear in terms of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in the OT was made perfectly clear in His coming.

In God's grace Job was also given an understanding of what is our ultimate hope in life and in death.

No, Job was not given all the wonderful details concerning the doctrine of the Trinity that we enjoy, but what we can say is this.

Job's hope in a Redeemer is the same hope that we have in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What is very significant about Job's testimony in Job 19:25-26 is that they come in the midst of some of the deepest lamentation and darkness recorded in Job.

Job speaks of being abandoned by all his friends and family.

My bone clings to my skin and to my flesh.

It is in the midst of his deepest sorrow that he still maintains his faith that God is His Redeemer.

The word Redeemer is the important Hebrew word *goel*, that is an important part of the book of Ruth.

Some say Job's only hope was just that of a relative, someone in his family would could provide that which he needed.

But the language of verses 25 and 26 show Job's hope was not for this life, but actually that of the life to come.

Prof. William Henry Green of Old Princeton Seminary wrote:

It may well be the intent of God to point us to that divine Redeemer, who is after all our nearest Kinsman, and who allied Himself to us in the bonds of our common humanity, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, that He might have a kinsman's right to take up our cause. Christ, our Elder Brother, vindicates us from the accusations of the law, and frees us from the sentence of death written in our members, and opens to us life and immortality with His work on the cross. As

Abraham saw Christ's day, it may likewise be said of Job that he rejoiced to see Christ's day, and he saw it and was glad.⁷

Job 19:25 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,

Prayer

Closing Hymn: 365

Benediction: Hebrews 12:1-3

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

⁷ William Henry Green, *The Book of Job Unfolded*, 77.