

## Life Lessons from the Book of Job

Job

Quentin Smith, Elder, July 3, 2022

Well, just before we start, I wonder if we could have the PowerPoint screen up there. I'm going to put up some points that we've been working through as we have been talking about Job. And I want to just to say this to you, as any of the pastors or elders who stand before you here, the burden of the Word of God is heavy. And my encouragement to you all is to please pray through the week for whoever is preparing the lesson; pray that God would give clarity boldness perspicuity as we attempt to bring you the full orb of the glory and the wisdom of God, I feel particularly inadequate to do that.

We are coming to the end of a series called Life Sessions from the Book of Job. In the first lesson, we talked about how it's possible to please God. And we talked a little bit about the fact that humility of heart is what matters. "To this one I will look: he who is humble and contrite of heart and who trembles at My word" (Isaiah 66:2). We talked about it being the great equalizer because we can all please God with the humility of heart. We also said that lesson number two was it's possible to suffer even if we are above reproach, because God might deem it necessary, 1 Peter 1:6. Thirdly, last week, we realized that it's possible to feel desperate in our humanity when we are going through trials and to go places emotionally, that would surprise us. And we talked about how feelings are so real and so deep and so desperate sometimes; but they can mislead us. And our feelings have to be subjugated to what we know from the Word of God to be truth. Fourthly, we talked about how suffering actually tests whether we believe what we say we believe because when it comes to us, it's much harder to actually put into practice what it's so much easier to tell other people to do. As parents, we need to remember that, because one of the things that will provoke your children is if you do something that you tell them not to do. It's much easier to tell people what it will be good to do than to be one of those to follow your own teaching. Number five, we said that sometimes we receive bad counsel from good people. Job received bad counsel from his friends, and it added to the weight, it added to the burden of what he was already dealing with. And so we talked about how do you recognize good counsel? And how do you prevent yourself from being subjected to and actually harmed by bad counsel? Those videos are available for you to catch up on but this week, we have the final four.

I want to kick off in Job 23, so turn their please with me. Lesson number six out of nine is it is possible to be steeped in right theology, and yet your response to be wrong. Job 23:1-7,

Then Job replied, "Even today my complaint is rebellion; His hand is heavy despite my groaning. Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come to His seat! I would present my case before Him and fill my mouth with arguments. I would learn the words which He would answer, and perceive what He would say to me. Would He contend with me by the greatness of His power? No, surely He would pay attention to me. There the upright would reason with Him; and I would be delivered forever from my Judge."

An attitude of desperation, wanting to know why he's going through this trial, which responds in that emotional response of wanting to go before the throne of God. And yet, in verse eight through the rest of the chapter, he outlines a perfect understanding of the sovereignty of God. It is possible to be completely right doctrinally, and for your response to be wrong. Let's read this.

“Behold, I go forward but He is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive Him; when He acts on the left, I cannot behold Him; He turns on the right, I cannot see Him. But He knows the way I take; when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”

Just stop there. He's saying that when he's looking for God who is invisible, he cannot see Him; but what he sees is the response of what's happening in his life. And he understands that God knows the way he takes. In other words, God knows his path. God knows how he is walking. God knows his life. It's all plain view to God. And then he says, “When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” Remember that this is pre Old Testament. There's no teaching, there's no Bible that he has. He doesn't have a passage to go to, but he understands that it is God who is trying him. And he understands that when He has tried him, he shall come forth as gold. And we all know that passage talks about gold being refined by fire.

“My foot has held fast to His path; I have kept His way and not turned aside.” [The steadfastness of his walk, despite what he's going through.] I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food. But He is unique and who can turn Him? And what His soul desires, that He does. For He performs what is appointed for me.”

Wow. “He performs what is appointed for me.” You know, this is one of the passages, arguably the clearest passage in the entire scriptures, to defend the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. We go here all the time as biblical counselors. We understand the three J's, Job, Joseph, and Jesus. Job in chapter 23. Joseph, Genesis 37, talking about the sovereignty of God in his life, and then Jesus in passages like Acts 2, where God ordained that He would go to the cross. Surely, this should have settled him. Surely he understood then, so well, that his circumstance is from the Lord and yet he wants to, in his increasing agitation, come before the throne of God and question Him. His conscience is clear, he's upright yet he's devastated, because he doesn't know why. His doctrine, 100%. His understanding, flawless. His response, not so great.

It's easy for us to go there. This wasn't something that was unique to Job, and I want to use this passage as a little bit of a springboard to a slightly different situation, but the same theme because I think it's important that we talk about this. Paul warns about our attitude when we have understanding. When he's talking about our liberty and freedom in Christ, he warns about being proud. 1 Corinthians 8, the first two verses,

“Concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant (literally “puffs up”), but love edifies. If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know”.

We are not full grown. We may love doctrine. We may know it, but we don't know it as we ought to know it. So knowledge of God, the blessing of theology, pure doctrine, these are beautiful things, but they can be marred by pride. When being right becomes more important than loving somebody else. When the debate about the rightness and perfection of the gospel, and the doctrine becomes more than more important than ministering it to somebody. When the Word of God is used to defend a position instead of ministering it. folks don't misunderstand me, defending truth is really important, but how it's done matters as well. Revelation 2:1, we all know that the church in Ephesus was hard working, they persevered, they were intolerant of evil men, they tested the spirits of those who claimed to be apostles and found them to be false; they didn't tolerate that. But as we've often said before, Jesus said that they had fallen, they had left their first love. They had lost the reason why they did that, and Jesus calls them to repent. He says, “Do the things that you did at the beginning.” Because these other things had taken and become more important than their love for God. They had taken on a primary importance and the reason for their doctrine had been eclipsed.

And when we think about our lives in this context, I want to say this. We came to Christ not knowing anything. We relied on His word teaching us anything that we know about Him and about doctrine, about His word about truth, He informed and taught us, and thereby those changes that we learned, changed everything in our lives. But what do we have that we did not first receive? Where's the room for pride? 1 Corinthians 4:7 says, “For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?” And folks, as we have loved these deep truths, and they are being increasingly challenged by the world, the temptation will be to defend that, but lose the love. To begin to hate the very people that we should be reaching out to. Paul says that the ideal in life is that our doctrine shows up in how we live. The doctrine of grace should read humility, not arrogance. Defend it when we need to, absolutely, but live it out, always.

Ephesians 4 is a good reminder, just turn there with me. And we'll go to Colossians 3 after that. Ephesians 4:1. Remember, Ephesians chapters one through three is all about the doctrine; chapters four through six is how we live that doctrine out and he starts off with a bang.

Therefore, [verse one]I, the prisoner of the Lord implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace.

Pure doctrine, shrouded by love. Colossians 3:12.

So as those who have been chosen of God, [right out the gate, those who have been chosen of God, what did you do?] holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

And that is the key to understanding about the doctrine is that we were first to be forgiven. Therefore, how could we withhold that from another person? Theology must drive the heart attitude and behavior. What you believe should show up in your life. And let me say this, we have to remember our status is as forgiven and redeemed. Before we judge anyone, our doctrine can be so right and yet our response and the way we treat others can be so wrong. Let me say this. Information does not equal transformation. Information does not equal transformation. We need that information to understand, but then it's the Holy Spirit that does the transforming work in our heart.

Number seven, we may be shocked to hear what others heard us say. As we look through this, turn with me to chapter 32 of Job. Eliphaz and Bildad, two of his friends, make three speeches; Zophar makes two. Speeches designed and to hammer Job into recognizing that he must have sinned and that's why he's suffering so much. But they come to the end of their speeches in chapter 32:1, and it says, "Then these three men ceased answering Job because he was righteous in his own eyes." I don't think that's right, but it's what they heard him say.

Job's defense was as one who knew that he was a sinner before God, but he could not connect a sin that would account for his current suffering. Job struggling with the truth that he is a righteous man, his conscience confirms that, but in his defense of that blamelessness he comes across as being proud. He is perceived as having blinding pride by his friends. In chapter 32 through 37, another younger man, the youngest of them all, whose name is Elihu, starts in. And he is angry with Job because he justified himself before God. He has been holding back because of his age; he was shy and afraid to tell Job what he thought. And he's paid close attention and begins to rebuke Job for what he has heard. In chapter 33:8-11, this is what Elihu heard.

"Surely you have spoken in my hearing, and I have heard the sound of your words: [and then he started to quote Job] 'I am pure, without transgression; I am innocent and there is no guilt in me. Behold, He invents pretexts against me; He counts me as His enemy. He puts my feet in the stocks; He watches all my paths.'

Behold, let me tell you, you are not right in this, for God is greater than man."

In chapter 34:5-6, just turn over that way, he misquotes Job. He says,

"Job has said, 'I am righteous, but God has taken away my right; should I lie concerning my right? My wound is incurable, though I am without transgression.' What man is like Job, who drinks up derision like water, who goes in company with the workers of iniquity, and walks with wicked men? For he has said, 'It profits a man nothing when he is pleased with God.'"

Job never said that. What Job said in chapter 21:15, was that that's what the wicked do. "Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him, and what would we gain if we entreat Him?" But he's talking about the wicked. Turn back with me to chapter 22. Eliphaz falsely accuses him, and this is a flat out false accusation from Eliphaz. I'm going to read the first eleven verses.

Then Eliphaz the Temanite responded, "Can a vigorous man be of use to God, or a wise man be useful to himself? Is there any pleasure to the Almighty if you are righteous, or profit if you make your ways perfect?"

In other words, if you are self-righteous and you are vigorous in your self-defense, can God use you?

"Is it because of your reverence that He reproves you, that He enters into judgment against you? Is not your wickedness great, and your iniquities without end? For you have taken pledges of your brothers without cause, and stripped men naked. To the weary you have given no water to drink, and from the hungry you have withheld bread. But the earth belongs to the mighty man, and the honorable man dwells in it. You have sent widows away empty, and the strength of the orphans has been crushed. Therefore snares surround you, and sudden dread terrifies you, or darkness, so that you cannot see, and an abundance of water covers you."

Those are some heavy accusations. Sending widows away empty, the strength of the orphans has been crushed. Those of you who were with us for our first sermon, remember we went to chapter 29, and we outlined how Job had remembered how he had been in the community. This is not true. Chapter 29, flat out refutes what Eliphaz is saying. And God refutes it because three times in chapters one and two, God calls him blameless, upright, fearing God, turning away from evil.

So, number one, as Job in his distress has tried to wrestle through in his understanding of why he's suffering, he's come across as proud. And number two, he has been misrepresented by his friends.

I think we've all been there. I think we've said things under stress, or under pressure that we greatly regretted. I think we've said things that we wished we had the opportunity to rewind. And those things have not represented us well or accurately, but we did say them so they must have come from somewhere. But it wasn't our best moment, but somebody is left with the impression as a result. It's not our norm. It's not par for the course. It's not our usual attitude. And you know what, sometimes there's very little grace that is offered, so it's very difficult to recover from that situation. "But you said." Or second example, we've been misunderstood. Something we said was taken a certain way, and there was

no asking for clarification. Or thirdly, we've flat out been misquoted. We've been accused of something that we did not say or do. Communication is very difficult. This happens all the time. We can be as careful as we can, and still get into hot water.

So what's the lesson? Well, the lesson is that we can be really surprised at what other people heard us say. For any of the doctors in the room if you've ever been sent a letter by the College of Physicians and Surgeons, where there's been a complaint by a patient, honestly, sometimes we look at those letters and we say, "Oh, how did this happen?" Because it's never our intention to upset somebody. Yet we find ourselves sometimes in that situation.

Well, what's the answer? Turn with me to James 3. As far as preventing this kind of situation, I've got some advice for us. Number one, recognize the power of the tongue. This is an incredible tool slash weapon that we wield. James 3:5.

So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how a great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.

Sometimes we need to taste the words that are coming out of our mouths, and so we don't get into trouble in the first place. I have a saying that says, "Respond, don't react." When we respond, it's a bit slower. When we react, it's right out the gate. We're waiting for that person to finish their sentence, and we lay it on them. Turn back a page to 1:19. James has some good advice for us regarding communication. He says,

This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.

If you have been in your distressed state, saying things that you regret, if you've spoken in anger or frustration, repent; just acknowledge it. Say that that was the situation. If you have been misunderstood, try to correct that person's understanding of what you said not only what they heard, but what you actually meant. You can correct that. You can make it right. The relationship can be restored. And finally, if you've been misquoted or lied about, you have a choice. You can either challenge it, or you can choose to cover it and let your reputation to speak for itself. Job teaches us that we will be surprised sometimes by what other people heard us say.

Number eight. Turn with me to Job 38. The eighth life lesson in our series of nine is that God is not accountable to us. In chapter 38, one of the more intimidating verses in this book, perhaps in the entire Bible is verse one. "Then the Lord answered." Job's been winding himself up becoming increasingly agitated about why he's suffering, and the Lord prepares to answer him. And as you go through the latter chapters of the book, you understand that there was no explanation given to Job ever. There was no explanation about this meeting that took place in heaven. In chapter one and two, there was no reassurance that God was pleased with him or that He praised Job before the sons of God and before Satan. There was no explanation that Satan came by with an accusation. There was no exit interview on the other side of the trial, nothing. Instead, God puts him in his place. In chapter 38:1-3,

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said, "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now gird up your loins like a man, and I will ask you, and you instruct me!"

It's interesting that He answers Job out of a whirlwind, it says. Something invisible, which you can't really see, but you can see the effects of; and that is so symbolic of God. God is invisible, but His effect is everywhere. And He tells him to man up, "Gird your loins like a man," man up. And He sarcastically tells Job to prepare to instruct God. Houston, we have a situation. And then with a theme that is entirely creation, He starts to ask Job questions. There are a series of questions that have obvious answers, but they are questions that induce absolute silence. There are questions that exalt God above the understanding and imagination of Job. Verse four through five,

"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding, who set its measurements? Since you know."

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You can just hear the sarcasm. So can God be sarcastic? Absolutely. But maybe it's a wisdom issue. I wouldn't encourage you to use this argument of sarcasm being a godly trait that you want to perfect, especially not with your wife, guys. But it's dripping with sarcasm. You know better than I? Let's hear your argument. Verse five,

"Who set its measurements? Since you know. Or who stretched the line on it? On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Or who enclosed the sea with doors when, bursting forth, it went out from the womb; [Verse 12.] Have you ever in your life commanded the morning, and caused the dawn to know its place? [Verse 16] Have you entered into the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep? [Verse 22] Have you entered the storehouses of the snow, or have you seen the storehouses of the hail, which I have reserved for the time of distress, for the day of war and battle? [Verse 28] Has the rain a father? Or who has begotten the drops of dew? From whose womb has come the ice? And the frost of heaven, who has given it birth? Water becomes hard like stone, and the surface of the deep is imprisoned. [We understand that in Canada.] Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades, or loose the cords of Orion? Can you lead forth a constellation in

its season, and guide the Bear with her satellites? [Those are all constellations and Job in chapter 9:9 acknowledges those exact three as being under God's control.] Do you know the ordinances of the heavens, or fix their rule over the earth? [Verse 36] Who has put wisdom in the innermost being or given understanding to the mind? Who can count the clouds by wisdom, or tip the water jars of the heavens, when the dust hardens into mass, and the clods stick together? Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions, when they crouch in their dens and lie in wait in their lair? Who prepares for the raven its nourishment when its young cry to God and wonder about without food? Do you know the time the mountain goats give birth? Do you observe the calving of the deer? [Chapter 39:5] Who sent out the wild donkey free? And who loosed the bonds of the swift donkey, to whom I gave the wilderness for a home and the salt land for his dwelling place? [Verse 9] Will the wild ox consent to serve you, or will he spend the night your manger? [Verse 13.] The ostriches' wings flap joyously with the pinion and plumage of love, for she abandons her eggs to the earth and warms them in the dust, and she forgets that a foot may crush them, or that a wild beast may trample them. She treats her young cruelly as if they were not hers; though her labor be in vain, she is unconcerned; because God has made her forget wisdom, and has not given her a share of understanding. When she lifts herself on high, she laughs at the horse and his rider. [Verse 19] Do you give the horse his might? Do you clothe his neck with a mane? Do you make him leap like the locust? His majestic snorting is terrible. He paws in the valley, and rejoices in his strength; He goes out to meet the weapons. He laughs at fear and is not dismayed; and he does not turn back from the sword. [Verse 26] Is it by your understanding that the hawk soars, stretching his wings toward the south? Is it at your command that the eagle mounts up and makes his nest on high?" [Chapter 40:1] Then the LORD said to Job, "Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who reproves God answer it." Job responded and said, "Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to You? I lay my hand on my mouth. Once I have spoken, and I will not answer; even twice, and I will add nothing more.

Then that the Lord upped the ante.

Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm. [Remember, it was a whirlwind first time; now it's out of a storm.] And He said, "Now gird up your loins like a man; and I will ask you, and you instruct Me." [Man up. Second time He says this to him. Job, man up.] "Will you really annul My judgment? [Verse 8] "Will you condemn Me that you may be justified? [Verse 9] Or do you have an arm like God, and can you thunder with a voice like His? Adorn yourself with eminence and dignity, and clothe yourselves with honour and majesty. Pour out the overflowings of your anger, and look on everyone who is proud, and make him low. Look on everyone who is proud, and humble him, and tread down the wicked where they stand. Hide them in the dust together; bind them in the hidden place, then I will also confess to you, that your own right hand can save you.

Job, do the things that I do, and then I'll pay attention and acknowledge you, and you can save yourself. And then for the rest of chapter 40 and 41, He describes the Behemoth and the Leviathan, two beasts that He's made, but we are uncertain what they are. It's beyond the scope of the sermon to draw that out. But man is not able to tame, that's the point. God has created these magnificent beasts, that man is unable to deal with. Chapter 41:10.

No one is so fierce that he dares to arouse him; [that's talking about Leviathan. Then God says,] “Who then is he that can stand before Me? Who has given to Me that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is Mine.”

I think Job was uncomfortable at this point. And it's so interesting to me that God chooses the evidence of creation and uses it so effectively to prove a point. “Open your eyes look around you, Job. All this is evidence of who I am. I am God. I am sovereign.” I find that fascinating. We don't need any other evidence other than creation to know that God.

And if you can look about and you can understand the intricacy and the complexity both at the macro level. In other words, the heavens, the planets, the stars, the constellations, the galaxies, try and get your head around that; that it goes on and on forever. And then you bring that right down to the micro, and you try and understand what's going on in a cell. And say to yourself that there is no God. I'm sorry, but you are lying, at least to yourself. If you can walk away from that intricacy and complexity and say that that happened by accident, then you, my friend are deceived. God intended that this would show that He is the ultimate designer, that He is the Ultimate Creator. There's no possible way that accidents create order. And if you're a teenager here today and you doubt that, and you want proof that order doesn't come from accidents, just open up the room to your bedroom, the door to your bedroom. When your mom and dad say tidy it up, it doesn't happen by itself. Psalm 19:1 says, “The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard.” And that's what creation does. It doesn't speak in words, but it speaks volumes, doesn't it? And this is so interesting when you go to Romans 1 that the existence of God is proven, Paul says, by what exists. Let's just read that. Romans 1:20, Paul writes this. He says,

“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, [and we said God is invisible] His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen, [ everybody has been able to wonder at this creation] being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

No one will be able to stand before the throne of God one day and say, “I never knew You existed.”

For even though they knew God, they did not honor him as God nor gave thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of

corruptible man and of birds and of four-footed animals and crawling creatures. Therefore, God gave them over ...”

Psalm 8:1, "O LORD, our LORD, how majestic is your name in all the earth, who have displayed your splendor above the heavens!"

Psalm 8:3-4, "When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, and the stars, which you have ordained; what is man that you take thought of him, and the Son of Man that you care for him?"

On and on it goes

Isaiah 40:26, “Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created the stars, the one who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; because of the greatness of His might and the strength of his power, not one of them is missing.”

So He is the ultimate designer, He is the Creator, but He is also the sustainer. Well, what's Job's response? Chapter 42:1-6.

Then Job answered the LORD and said, “I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. ‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’ Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, things to wonderful for me, which I did not know.

‘Hear, now, and I will speak; I will ask You, and You instruct me.’ [quoting God there.] I have heard of You by the hearing of my ear; but now my eye sees You. Therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes.”

What humbled Job? What put his heart at peace? A clearer vision of who God is. God just had to parade a tiny fraction of the created order to help Job understand that He was God. And remarkably, when the picture of God becomes so clear to him, the challenge and the pain of his suffering seems to be eclipsed. So, in the light of God not being answerable to us, why do we suffer? God is sovereign. How do we suffer well? We remember that God is sovereign.

Point number nine, God is able to restore. Chapter 42:7 to the end.

It came about after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, “My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends, because you have not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has. Now therefore, take for yourself seven bulls and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves, and My servant Job will pray for you. For I will accept him so that I may not do with you according to your folly, because you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has.” So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the LORD told them; and the Lord accepted Job.

The LORD restored the fortunes of Job when he prayed for his friends, and the LORD increased all that Job had twofold. Then all his brothers and all his sisters and all who had known him

before came to him, and they ate bread with him in his house; and they consoled him and comforted him for all the adversities which the Lord had brought on him. And each one gave him a piece of money, and each a ring of gold. The LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; and he had 14,000 sheep and 6,000 camels and 1,000 yoke of oxen and 1,000 female donkeys. He had seven sons and three daughters. He named the first one Jemimah, and the second Keziah, and the third Keren-happuch. In all the land no women were found so fair as Job's daughters; and their father gave them inheritance among their brothers. After this, Job lived 140 years, and saw his sons and his grandsons, four generations. And Job died, an old man and full of days.

God is able to restore. In Job's case, it was his wealth and his reputation. Job is vindicated before his friends by God, once again calling him "My servant Job." He calls him that four times in two verses. He's also told to intercede on his friends' behalf and offer sacrifices and pray for them that God might not do with them according to their folly because they misrepresented. Their mistake was to only give one reason why people suffer and that is for sin. But God says that He sends suffering even when we are above reproach, so they had misrepresented God. Job's situation proves that God is able to restore. There's another passage in Hebrews 11 where Abraham understood that God was able to restore when Abraham was asked to take Isaac and sacrifice this child that he had waited 100 years for. He did it because he understood that God was able to bring him back from life from death. God could bring him back to life, even though he killed them. And that's what allowed Abraham to go ahead and raise that knife.

So in conclusion, isn't this the God? Isn't this the God we know? A God of restoration. He may not give you riches, but He can restore you. He can take a broken vessel. He can take a sin-stained life. He can take an unrighteous life or rebellious life and He can make it into a new creation. He causes us to be washed, and that, my friends is the essence of the gospel.

Titus 3:5 says, "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit."

1 Peter 1:3 says, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to his great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead... for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is through the living and enduring word of God."

Now that is radical, that is about as restored as it comes. To be born again! To be a new creation. That's the promise of what God does. And I often hear counselees who are wrestling with faith and Christianity, and they have this question, "I don't know why God has allowed all this to happen to me. I don't know why He has left me here." And the answer is that it's often His sovereign will to allow us to be in a situation that is beyond our control, to help us see that we're not as robust as we think. That we cannot live as independently from God as we think. We we're not as complete or as strong as we'd like

to believe. And He takes us to the end of ourselves, so that we might actually recognize the vanity of life without Him, and that we might actually surrender.

Folks, if you don't know the Lord, today, I want to say this to you. You can't fix your life. You can't fix it to the extent that you will be acceptable to God. None of us can. What we do is we come before Him as the God who is the Creator of the universe and your life, and we submit to Him and we surrender. And we simply ask Him to forgive that rebellion, to forgive that sin. And we start to trust in the fact that Jesus has taken that punishment on a cross on our behalf, so that we would never have to be punished for the sin that has marred that relationship with God. The greatest restoration that he makes is when He draws sinners to himself. Isaiah 59:1-2 says,

Behold the Lord's hand is not so short that it cannot save; nor is his ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.

And it's only when we humble ourselves before the Lord, when we recognize who He truly is, and we come before Him in repentance, that you can be saved. And you would experience that restoration; you'd be saved, you'd be forgiven, and then you walk in faith growing in knowledge and wisdom until He comes or until you die. We were created for relationship with God, but we chose to walk away from that. We chose, in our rebellion, to throw off that authority in our lives, so that we could go ahead and sin without apparent consequence, pursuing our own freedom, freedom to sin. And Paul says that we were dead in our sins and trespasses.

I've seen lots of dead people, unfortunately, in my career. Dead people don't respond. And Paul says, we were dead in our trespasses and sins. We became dead to all the things of God. We did that. We suppressed the knowledge of God so that we could live in the lust of our flesh, indulging the desires of our flesh of the mind; we were by nature, children of wrath, subject to that punishment. You must understand my friend, if you're not saved here today, before you come to Christ, your default position is that of being condemned. God will punish that rebellion in hell for eternity. And if you continue, God will give you over, harden your heart, but if you see Him for who He is – your Creator, and you believe the evidence and seek Him, and you confess that rebellion, and you ask Him to forgive you, and you understand that Christ absorbed that punishment on the cross, He will save you. He will restore you back to that relationship. He will forgive that sin and the gulf that currently separates you will be gone.

In 1987 I was a medical student in Cape Town. I was in the middle of my final exams, and I was anxious. I wasn't a great student. I was too distracted with ministry. And as I was sitting at my desk I looked out to my right to the window. And there was this magnificent display that God had brought to calm my heart. It was the sky. It was clouds. And it was the colour of them that captured my imagination. And I wrote a poem, only poem that I've ever written. It took me three minutes. And I want to share it with you as we end. It's called "Sundown from My Window."

There were no words

just communication.

No frames, just content

As the skies quietly declared the unspoken majesty

Of God.

The scene so all knowing, the viewer all known,

Lighting up my heart and quelling

The shifting and restless anxieties

With the assurance that He who controls the

Clouds,

Controls me.

So unworthy am I

So filled with flaw... so bound

By earthly nature: but longing to be woven

In godliness,

To break free from stumbling

And glow with the quiet assurance

As these clouds

Of one who knows his Maker

God is able to restore. Let's pray.

Father, we are so humbled when we perceive You rightly. Father, we long for that right relationship with You that is born of humility, that is born of understanding who You are. And Father, You are able to take us as frail, sinful people, and through the Gospel, the right understanding of why Christ came, You're able to make us right with You. And Father, sometimes it takes suffering. Sometimes, You get our attention by allowing us to recognize pain, circumstances that are beyond our control, circumstances that are so difficult. And yet, through all of that, Lord, You promise us peace and righteousness and a future in eternity with You. If we will but acknowledge the rebellion, and if we will turn, and in humility, believe. The evidence is all there, but maybe our eyes haven't seen it yet. And as Job in his distress cried out, "I had heard you by the hearing of the ear, but now, my eyes see You." I pray that You will make yourself known that we would all see You in the way that he saw You. And that we would repent and we would truly understand and exalt You today for the God that you are. A God that

will bring judgment against sin, and it will be swift and it will be right and no one will stand against the fury of Your anger. And yet Father, You are perfectly loving as You are perfectly angry. And in Christ, Lord, You sent Your Son and He obeyed. And He took upon Himself the wrath that You reserved for sinners like us.

And Father, we can only stand and ask, "What do we have that we have not been given?" And so I pray, Lord, that as we leave today, we would be encouraged, we would be joyful, we would be vessels that have been broken, but now restored. And that Father, we would be able to understand Your word, and not defend doctrine with pride, but allow Your word to affect us, so that we would be loving vessels. ambassadors for Christ, humble, reaching out. Recognizing that by grace You've saved us and there but for the grace of God, go I. So, Father, thank You for Your word. Thank You for these deep, beautiful doctrines of truth. We are a blessed people. And we exalt Your name today. In Jesus name, Amen.