

PM Job 1

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Date: 26 October 2025

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[0:00] Job 1 then and verse 1. This is page 498 in the Church Bibles.

! Job 1 then. There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job.! And that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.

There were born to him seven sons and three daughters. He possessed 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and very many servants, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the East.

His sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one on his day, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. And when the days of the feast had run their course, Job would send and consecrate them.

And he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, It may be that my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.

[1:12] Thus did Job continually. Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them.

The Lord said to Satan, From where have you come? Satan answered the Lord and said, From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.

And the Lord said to Satan, Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?

Then Satan answered the Lord and said, Does Job fear God for no reason? 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. But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.

[2:16] And the Lord said to Satan, Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand. So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.

Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house. And there came a messenger to Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the donkeys feeding beside them.

And the Sabaeans fell upon them, and took them, and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword. And I alone have escaped to tell you. While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, The fire of God fell from heaven, and burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them.

And I alone have escaped to tell you. While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, The Chaldeans formed three groups, and made a raid on the camels, and took them, and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword.

And I alone have escaped to tell you. While he was yet speaking, there came another, and said, Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house.

[3:30] And behold, a great wind came across the wilderness, and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead. And I alone have escaped to tell you.

Then Job arose, and tore his robe, and shaved his head, and fell on the ground, and worshipped. And he said, Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

And all this Job did not sin, or charge God with wrong. Well, let's sing again now. A psalm which speaks of our rest in God.

It's number 62. There can be times, can't there, when the Christian life seems easy.

[4:32] We receive the word, gladly perhaps. But then, as Jesus puts it, the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word.

And we become unfruitful. Trouble puts faith to the test. And in our passage this evening, in the first chapter of the book of Job, we find trouble putting faith to the test.

We find Job's reputation, Job's pointed to by the Lord, as an example of a righteous man. And we find his reputation challenged by Satan.

You see that in verses 9 to 11 of our chapter. Then Satan answered the Lord and said, Does Job fear God for no reason? 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. But stretch out your hand, and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.

[5:44] And so to vindicate Job's righteousness, God permits Satan to put Job to the test.

Verse 12, And the Lord said to Satan, Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand. So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.

And then following, in the verses that follow this, from verses 13 to 19, we find the tragic loss of all of Job's possessions, and even his children, in verses 13 to 19.

But then at the end of the chapter, we find, and this will be our focus today, or this evening, Job's response to this. And we find out whether or not Satan was correct in his charge that he had brought against Job.

Satan has said that if you remove all that Job has, he will curse God to his face. But by the end of the chapter, Job is vindicated.

[6:58] Rather than cursing God, Job in fact blesses God. And I want us to look at this chapter, and particularly Job's response at the end of the chapter this evening.

And our text, if you like, is really going to be verses 20 and 21. And I hope that by endeavouring in some measure to understand how it is that Job is able to bless the Lord in trouble, as he does here, that will help us in approaching trouble in our own lives.

And I want us to consider four things this evening. Four things that Job acknowledges. Firstly, something about himself, and then three things about God.

And we're going to consider then grief, Job's grief, then God's gifts, God's government, and God's glory. Grief, gifts, government, glory.

Well, firstly then, Job's grief. And I want us firstly here to simply underline Job's loss. He was, we read verse 3 here, the greatest of all the people of the East.

[8:23] He had, verse 3, 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 female donkeys, and very many servants.

In addition to that, verse 2, he has seven sons and three daughters. But then, something happened. Something inexplicable to Job, though the reader is aware of what has happened between God and Satan. All of Job's wealth is lost.

He had sheep, camels, oxen, asses, servants, but then, what do we read from verses 13 to the end of verse 19? His sheep are destroyed by fire from heaven, verse 16, by lightning, it seems to be.

His camels, verse 17, are taken by raiding Chaldeans. His oxen, and his donkeys, and his donkeys, are taken by the Sabaeans, verse 15.

[9:31] And even his household, the many servants that he had, are killed, along with everything else, except these four messengers, who were spared in order to bring him the tragic news.

What is being described is the complete obliteration of Job's wealth. It wasn't as if Job could say, well, at least I've got my pension invested, or it's a good job, I had those shares in my ISA, or anything like that.

No. Though the wealth that is listed in verse 3 is gone by the end of verse 19. And just let that sink in.

And remember that it is often more difficult to lose wealth than never to have had it. What a change for Job to go from this greatest of all of the men of the East to being a possessor of virtually nothing.

And then remember that this isn't even the most significant thing. The first of the blessings upon Job that's mentioned in verse 2 are his seven sons and his three daughters.

[10:51] And in verse 19 their loss is the kind of culmination, the last and worst thing that comes to Job as what has been lost. He loses all of his wealth and all his children and the future that they offer all in a single day.

And indeed as it's presented here it seems that it was within minutes of each other as Job received the news. One messenger comes and before he's finished speaking another one comes with the next tragic event.

Just imagine that situation. We're probably talking about a level of calamity which has rarely if ever fallen upon any other individual.

one minute he's a wealthy man blessed with many children the next he's a pauper with no children. Now we're going to look over our next points in more detail at Job's spoken response in verse 21 here.

And it is a model response. It's a response which we ought to seek to emulate. it's a response which vindicates both Job and God. Contrary to what Satan had insinuated by verse 22 we read in all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.

[12:20] However before we come on to that we need to note a couple of things which I hope will help us to avoid drawing overly simplistic conclusions from what Job says here.

Firstly we need to note that Job acknowledges his loss here. Verse 20 Then Job arose tore his robe and shaved his head.

What's being modelled here isn't a sort of stoic British stiff upper lip sort of thing. And nothing which we're going to go on to say should be taken to suggest that when calamity strikes it is inappropriate to acknowledge the horror and pain of what has happened.

Job does that here. His actions are the culturally appropriate expressions of his grief. That being able to bless God even in tragedy and that's what Job does here should never be taken to mean that we ought not to feel grief or that we ought not to express it.

What's happening to Job while it's within God's purposes is a result of living in a fallen world. It's ultimately a result of sin and it is entirely appropriate to express anguish and mourning over it.

[13:52] It's a result of sin in the world I mean not of Job's sin specifically. But I think something else needs to be said here as well. Job is going to go on in this book to question God.

To cry out questioning why all of this has happened to him. In Job chapter 3 he's going to go on to curse the day of his birth.

In Job 24 he's going to question why the wicked seem to prosper while he and his righteousness is afflicted. Now it may be that in some of the things that Job says he oversteps the mark of what was right.

I don't think that we can necessarily take the statement at the end of the chapter that in all this Job did not sin as applying to the whole of the book.

Certainly by chapter 38 God is going to respond to Job by saying who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge. Nonetheless what is the judgment at the end of the book?

[15:08] Job 42 verse 7 what does God say to Job's counselors who are going to accuse him as the book goes on. Job 42 verse 7 the Lord speaks to Job and he says he's spoken to Job and then he says to a life as the demonite about how his anger burns against him but why?

End of that verse for you have not spoken of me what is right as my servant Job has. Whether Job did overstep the mark once or twice he wasn't wrong fundamentally in the struggle and the questions.

If all we had was Job 1 we may conclude wow what a man Job was suffering in this way and then he responds with this incredible statement but we may also conclude that really no one else could do that that Job is just a one off he's a sort of super man but that would only give part of the picture whatever Job says here he does struggle and the rest of the book is going to bring that out and so I say here right at the start before we get into any of the detail here don't take anything that we're going to see as meaning that acknowledging the difficulties and pains of this life is ruled out by what

we're going to see this man here Job struggled and that is not inconsistent with his testimony here any suggestion that Job's example means that he didn't struggle is to miss the point it's to make Job into a one dimensional character you know you can imagine a soldier facing the bullets of war and battle to protect his family and his country and his friends and some soldiers are able to face battle with an outward calm but if someone were to just look at such a soldier and say you know he wasn't afraid at all he was just calm about the whole thing he wasn't bothered well it's very likely that that person is very wide of the mark it's very possible that his mind is a maelstrom of fears but that he knows how to control it and so it is with Job here he speaks these words and they're important words and they show something important about how we ought to and how he is able to face trouble but it doesn't mean he doesn't have questions it doesn't mean that he isn't finding it difficult and it doesn't mean that we ought to expect of others or of ourselves that we can face trouble with scarcely a care in the world even the sinless

Jesus knew what grief was and we cannot be exempt from it either well that's first point Job's grief but now secondly God's gifts having set that background I now want us to get into what Job actually says here and our next two points are going to build up two key realizations two key things that Job realizes and that we need to realize too if we are going to be able to emulate Job in blessing God in times of trouble and the first thing that he acknowledges is that his prosperity came from God that is he acknowledges the title at this point is God's gifts and he does this by firstly acknowledging that he brought nothing into the world look at what he says in verse 21 there naked

I came from my mother's womb he came into this world quite literally with nothing without even his clothing and then he goes on to note that though in this life he has gained some things there's a limit to that as well they are not so linked to his person as that they now belong to him for all eternity no second part of verse 21 naked came I from my mother's womb and naked shall I return and just in case that speaking about coming from the womb and returning is confusing to you he's probably picking up on that Old Testament idea which speaks in metaphor of the unborn being formed in the lowest parts of the earth and so when he speaks of his going to the land of the dead which is also spoken of metaphorically as under the earth he speaks of returning there taking nothing with him his material possessions then are inherently impermanent he knows that they cannot last they are fleeting whatever happens they offer this life only as a maximum we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out and the conclusion from this is that he therefore has no right inherently to these things he knows that at one time he didn't have them he came into this world with nothing he knows that whatever happens there is coming a day when he will lose them he will not have them anymore and if he has no right to them he therefore has no right of complaint when they are removed the truth is that all that he had was in fact an unmerited gift that's what he says next verse 21 naked came I from my mother's womb and naked shall I return the Lord gave everything that Job has and had was not innately his it was not even his because of his intelligence or work ethic even that came from the

[21:43] Lord all that he has is a gift the Lord gave he says now we'll come on to the rest of what Job says in a moment but we need to grasp this it might not be something we like to acknowledge or like to grasp but we cannot respond rightly as Job does here to trouble unless we have grasped this fundamental principle that we have nothing by right that everything that we have has been given to us by the Lord just think for a moment of those soldiers currently fighting on the border of the Ukraine Russia war why isn't that you well it's an accident of birth really you could have been born in Ukraine conscripted to fight was it anything inherent to you as a being that means that you have a right to avoid that before God that this should be their not but not yours no it's purely of

God's providence that that is not you Job's wisdom recognises that that God's purposes are higher than anything we can understand and that to some he gives material wealth and peace and security to others he does not or he gives it to a lesser degree but to none in this life does he give any of these things by right but as a gift it's not a right you are born to it's not a right you can earn by your own merit it's part of what Job's friends get wrong later on when they're insistent that Job you must have done something wrong for this to have happened to you I wonder have you realised this wisdom without acknowledging this you're not going to be able to follow the rest of what Job does here the first thing to realise and Job realises it here is that we cannot ultimately accuse God of

injustice because he does not continue to give what was only ever freely given as an unmerited gift to begin with you wouldn't or at least I hope you wouldn't fall out with a friend who one year gives you an incredible gift maybe worth hundreds or thousands of pounds or something and then the next year he follows it up by giving you a mug perfectly nice mug but not to be compared to the incredible gift of the year before now of course the incredible generosity of one occasion does not mean that the person needs to carry on in the same vein so it is here that's the first thing we need to realise and it may be a bitter pill to swallow but it's a necessary one that in this life we are given nothing by right well we've had Job's grief we've had

God's gifts but now thirdly third of our four points God's government because Job says more than this he doesn't stop with saying the Lord gave does he he goes on verse 21 to say also and the Lord has taken away now this is important I want you to consider what Job could have said he could have said oh those Sabeans who've taken away my cattle and my donkeys who've killed my servants he could have railed against the Chaldeans who had stolen his camels he could have cursed the builders who had made that house with a roof that collapsed he could have called down judgment on the wind which had brought the house down on a human level perhaps all of these complaints would in some measure have been just and

Job could have allowed him to eat away at him and nursed his bitter heart and taken his own bitter soul to the grave now maybe in these circumstances that's how you would have responded maybe in fact it's how you have responded when you've been brought to times of affliction and trouble and it's understandable it's easy to do but none of these responses will enable you to respond to trouble rightly as Job does here no what does Job do he sees past the second causes to the primary cause and that changes everything doesn't it what causes bitterness from wrongs well surely it's the idea that if these people have sort of robbed you of what you should have had you know

I would have had that job if only these people hadn't lied about me I would have had that position if I had been recognized only as I should have been oh I'd still have my mother or my father or my husband or my wife if only the doctors had been more diligent maybe you've done this truth be told you probably have as no doubt have I we like to be able to blame other people or even random events for things don't we to enable us to explain to others but perhaps most of all to ourselves why it is that we don't have what we think we ought to have now I want you to understand here what I am and what I'm not saying here the Chaldeans were wrong the Sabeans were wrong and they needed to repent before

[28:24] God of their actions and it may well be that as you look at the circumstances of your own life there are those who have been in the wrong there are those who have sinned against you and perhaps terribly and nothing that I am saying this evening should be taken as denying that or minimizing the need for proper reconciliation and repentance and even in some cases judgment and justice but Job does not allow this to overcome him he could have raged against every second cause and he could have done so with some justice but he has the wisdom to see something else that this was from the Lord have you realized that ultimately the events of your life whether for good or for ill are not because of what you or other people or random chance have done rather you have been placed in your life circumstances because

God has sovereignly ordained that that should be the case when you realize this it's an important step all of your life's circumstances have been ordained by the God of all things he has ordained whatsoever comes to pass as the shorter catechism puts it nothing happens aside from his purposes when I was 18 I briefly worked in a call centre and inevitably from time to time things went wrong and people would phone up angry because some delivery had been messed up or something but there were limits to what I could do often the policies which were causing the frustration had been decided at a far higher level than I was at and sometimes all I could do was to offer to get someone more senior to call back now people could come and they could complain to me and about me and

I hope this wasn't the case but maybe sometimes they had a right to complain about something I or someone else had done but ultimately in most cases the issue was decided by someone far higher up the food chain than I was now I'm a company that's made a mess of arranging someone's fridge delivery of course not but I hope you can see the point here these people gave me a hard time and

that was fine it was part of the job but in a very real way they were venting their frustration at the wrong person if you want to understand what is happening in your life then don't get lost at the top your circumstances are what they are because God has ordained that it should be so have you realised that we've had

Job's grief we've had God's gift we've had God's government but now fourthly and finally God's glory we come to our final point now and given everything that we've said it may be a surprising one we've seen that Job's wisdom enables him to see beyond the second causes of his suffering to the sovereign Lord who had ordained it and so we come to this test and remember that this whole situation has been set up at least in part to vindicate Job Satan has insisted that Job will curse God if his material possessions are taken away and so this is put to the test now Job has realized that the sovereign God is over all this and maybe for many that would result in the curse being issued but no what's

Job's response verse 20 then Job arose tore his robe and shaved his head and he fell to the ground and worshipped and even more than that how does verse 21 end naked he says I came from my mother's womb and naked shall I return the Lord gave and the Lord has taken away blessed be the name of the Lord he goes beyond even offering an act of worship for himself and he desires a greater blessing of the Lord's name may the Lord's name be blessed that's what he's saying in response to all that has happened to him Job desires that the name of the Lord will be blessed and praised beyond even himself that's the implication and as we come to this final point we need to ask how does Job get to this point worshipping the

[34:04] God who has ordained this calamity indeed desiring even that others would bless and praise and worship him also well it is on one level of course firstly an outworking of our second point Job's prosperity has been unmerited and a free gift of God and it would be wrong of Job to reject God's equally free removal of it there's been no injustice but secondly and I think this is the most significant reason I think that this anticipates the final conclusion of this book Job I've already said this at the beginning he's going to go through struggle and difficulty as he seeks to come to terms with what has happened to him and the speeches that are recorded in this book between Job and his friends record that sometimes Job is going to sail close to the wind he doesn't curse God but he does in chapter 3 curse

God's gift of life to him but ultimately he's going to receive a vision of God and seeing the majesty and splendor and wisdom and power of the eternal God he is simply going to fall down before him God never answers Job's questions about why this has happened to him and that's a noteworthy thing actually in a book where the reader knows all the way through about the discussion between Satan and God and perhaps we're expecting finally this to be revealed to Job but no it's never explained to Job because Job doesn't need to know that he simply needs to fall down before the one who is over all indeed even we don't know what lay behind all of this

God had ordained Satan's challenge also we can only speculate as to the reasons why but we don't need to know either we simply need to fall down before the all wise and all powerful God and that ending I would suggest is anticipated here!

why?

so that he who knew no sin could bear the penalty of a sin that you deserve if you have trusted in him and that the triune God the father who sent the son the son who gave himself the spirit who indwells his people that one has ordained whatever has happened and he has done so from a position of such power and wisdom of which we can never even conceive taking into account every circumstance and second cause you didn't expect the circumstances of your life to be what they are maybe you blame someone maybe you blame yourself or you blame a random universe no it was the God whose wisdom and power and mind is infinitely beyond yours who ordained that maybe you think your life has been wasted because of the mistakes of others it was

[39:06] God who purposed it you didn't expect your health to take the turn that it has it wasn't your doctor or anyone's neglect or me a chance it was the Lord you mourn over bereavement Job knew that he lost his ten children in a single day in a moment it was the God who ordained all for his good who would ordain that now that's not to say and I want to

underline this in case anyone misunderstands it it's not to say don't take responsibility for or learn from your mistakes it's not to say don't seek reconciliation it's not to say don't seek repentance or even in some cases justice from others and it's not to say don't grieve and mourn but don't stop there once you have learned what you can't!

you have put right what you can look up to the one who ordains whatsoever comes to pass these things are hard they're difficult Job knew that and he laments that throughout this book but know this that if you are a Christian then no one desires your good more than your father in heaven and he has proven that by sending his only begotten son to die for you in your place to spare you from the pains of hell by taking them upon himself will you as you are faced with that even with the trial and difficulties of this world will you with Job fall down and worship will you leave these things with the Lord will you learn to trust this one Luther Luther is alleged to have said that even if he saw Christ standing with a sword drawn in his hand he would still run into his arms is that your testimony can you do that in faith and trust and will you bless this one surely you can do nothing else will you realize his wisdom and his workings in the world and when you do so what other response can there be if you can bring yourself to leave it with this one then you can only bless him for all of his wisdom and all of his power and all of his goodness and if you've never known this one this evening will you fall down before him also will you rest in his wisdom and power and might well we need to conclude now but we've seen these four things that Job acknowledges his own grief yes but he also sees

God's gifts all of the good things he had are from God he acknowledges God's government all events for good or ill come from the Lord and from his infinite wisdom and can you then before the glory of God bless the Lord with him well I want us to do that now with our final singing we're going to sing the closing verses of Psalm 72 in this verse ending ending ending ending ending ending ending ending