

Blessed be the Name of the Lord

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[0 : 00] In every act of God's permission of affliction, there's purpose, there's grace. The points to follow that we're going to look at in a moment, I pray, will help us to see that.

For some, that affliction is the loss of a loved one. That loved one is old or young. But he'd suffer. We grieve. We're pained.

Jesus wept. Jesus wept when his friend Lazarus died. We'll weep. We'll weep. I'll weep with those who weep. Because for others, the affliction is the current pandemic that's causing so much fear and distress and even despair.

In this prolonged period of restriction and constriction, absence from close family and friends, there are distances that appear even greater because of all the various rules that have been set by our governments.

There's job loss. There's job uncertainty. Your work patterns have been altered. School practices have been changed. There's fear. There's real fear.

[1 : 15] There's real uncertainty. And from that comes recrimination and blame. And there's division in society. And, you know, we might be tempted even to lose heart.

And become, you know, really despondent and depressed even at all that's been taken away in order to stem the advance of the virus that's destroyed so many lives across the globe.

So much has been taken away from even the various regular patterns of worship that, you know, even up till March this year we'd so, you might even say, taken for granted.

Certainly been so used to over the years. Even the very way that we attended church services and interacted one with another in fellowship and worship. That's changed.

Even the very things that we practice regularly, even in a week-to-week basis or even in a less regular basis. The sacraments, for example.

[2 : 14] Even the very way that we join together in praise. It's all changed. Every one of us is under a varying degree of restraint and constraint and suffering.

So where do you turn to? Where do you turn to for your encouragement in this difficult and desperate time? Where do you turn to even when you're suffering particular times of grief and loss and suffering?

Do you turn to all the various mind-numbing things that anesthetize you for a little while but leave you even in a worse state than before?

Or do you turn to God's Word for comfort and encouragement? Because it's His Word and only His Word that can truly nourish your heart. It's only His Word that enables you to engage your heart and mind and soul to lead you to the God of all grace.

To the God whose sovereign glory, yes, is revealed. And yes, even when He has taken so much from us, we can still praise Him.

[3 : 25] Praise Him with the heart. And with Job, cry out and say, Blessed be the name of the Lord. Even in Job's loss, his deep distress, you can still say, The Lord has given.

The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. And I pray that this morning then that we'll find that encouragement that your hearts need, that encouragement from God's Word, that encouragement that speaks to the suffering, that speaks to the bewildered, speak to those of you who are even now in great pain, and that from God's Word we'll see that God knows, that God hears, and that God loves, and that God in His perfect providence does for each one who are His in His grace.

And this morning then I want to turn to this particular example of Job. God willing, in the next few weeks, we're going to look at other characters in Scripture who were tested severely, who were tried in their faith.

And yet through these trials, through these sufferings, we're the stronger, the more faithful, the more trusting in God, as God even gave to His people particular afflictions to bring them to see all the more clearly that God is truly the God of all grace.

He's the God of mercies. As somebody once said to me many years ago, God is too kind to be cruel. even in the darkest moments of your life and loss.

[5 : 06] And, well, we're going to turn then, as we said, to this example of Job. It's reckoned to be the oldest, certainly the oldest recorded or written down book in the Bible.

Job, the main character here, of course, as the book's title gives us. Here's a man who went through the most severe loss and trial, and yet he could still declare of his trust in God, the God who does all things well.

And so let's briefly then just think about who this man was, the character of Job, before we look to see what we call Job in the heavenly spotlight.

Job spotlighted in heaven, in conversation between Satan and God. And then see his suffering, see his loss, and see the reaction to his reaction to that great loss.

So what about this man Job? Well, he's a man of integrity. He's a man, we're told, of upright behavior, right at the start of the chapter.

[6 : 12] Obviously, he's not sinless, no one's sinless apart from the Lord Jesus. But here's a man who showed that in his life, he's a faithful follower of the one true God.

He has a rare holiness in relation to all who were on earth at that time. Here's a man whom God honored with wealth and prosperity.

He was the richest person in that particular part of the world. He's a man who's been greatly blessed by God. He's got all the things that sort of made up for what was considered at that time anyway, a happy life.

And, you know, he loved his family so much, he was even prepared to offer sacrifices for them, as he said, just in case they'd cursed God. Here's a man whose life seemed so secure.

There's no hint of the tragedy to come. A man whose life appeared to be just a life of peace and prosperity. But it was that very uprightness that Job had in his heart.

[7 : 21] It was that very uprightness that Satan, Satan the liar, the deceiver, Satan asserted that, well, Job was only being holy, only being faithful to God because of what he could get out from God as reward.

And verse 6 to verse 12, in fact, you read of that dialogue between Satan and God. And it's a dialogue that eventually is going to lead to great suffering on Job's part.

But it's suffering by divine appointment, by God's permission. And we're going to see that as we consider, even in our own application, all suffering by divine appointment.

And here we see Job here, this man of integrity, he's in the spotlight. He's in the spotlight of heaven.

And yes, so much of what we read, certainly in verses 6 to 12, in many ways is mysterious.

But for our purposes this morning, there are important lessons to learn, even with respect to the providences that God maybe has given you personally, giving us collectively, even in the things that are happening in our world today, all under God's providence.

[8 : 43] Well, let's look at Job in the heavenly spotlight. In these verses 6 to 12, it's by God's permission, we have to say that suffering happens. It's by God's permission that the world pandemic is happening.

And we see that truth, the principle in verse 8, when we see that God is not going to allow any harm on Job and anyone without His divine permission, without His full knowledge.

Verse 8 tells us, it's God who brings up the subject of Job. And Satan has this conversation with God, but it's a conversation that God's initiated.

And Satan tells God that He's been roaming over the earth. As Peter tells us in the New Testament of Satan, like a roaring lion, seeking whom He might devour.

And he tells God that this is what He's been doing. And obviously, he's been aware of Job and his righteousness. And Satan replies, well, Job, he fears you, God.

[9 : 51] But there's got to be some selfish reason, Satan thinks, some selfish reason for that fear. There's got to be reasons. Job's fear, Satan's saying, it must be artificial.

It can't be genuine. Satan says, God, you've made it easy for Job. You've made the conditions right for Job to develop this character, this righteous character.

You've built a hedge around him. Then he says in verse 11, stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he'll curse you to your face.

To your face. In other words, Satan's saying in the real world where people suffer loss, where people suffer bereavement, Satan's saying, that's where people curse God.

That's where goodness, as it were, just goes away. Satan's implying that goodness, that true, sincere integrity, can't survive in the real world of human pain and loss and suffering.

[10:54] And so God allows Satan to test Job's faith. Job's going to be tried. He's going to be tested. His faith's going to be tested.

That faith's not going to break. It's going to be tested to the limit without testing under God's divine appointment. And again, we have to say, from what we derive even from that truth, that nothing happens without God's control.

The Lord, He is God. And rather than being crushed and burdened and even in a constant state of perplexity at the providences that God is giving to us, even in these present times, that we'll know and have that affirmation of faith that God knows and that God's providence is never haphazard.

God's providence isn't arbitrary. All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. Later in the story of Job, Job said and affirmed with faith that when He has tried me, when God has tried me, I shall come forth, I shall come out as gold.

And these times of testing that we're all going through, that you're going through, these are times that God has ordained from all eternity. He's prepared these times even in the glory of heaven itself.

[12:29] Let's be assured that God knows and that God cares. And His purposes are right. And it's not for any of us to complain before Him or even to think that God is malicious in any way towards any of His children.

Yes, as with Job, we're suffering testing times, trying times. Your faith, my faith's been tested. But I pray that you'll remain strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

And that you'll know that God is all things well. That your faith will be strengthened. Even as Job's faith was brought forth here, even in the words that we're going to focus on, particularly in a moment, the great words of verse 21.

Before we look at these words, let's look at his suffering and his loss. We read in verse 13 of a day that changed Job's life, or certainly a day that turned Job's life upside down.

It was nothing that indicated that the tragedies were about to happen. Four things that happened, each increasingly more intense, more challenging.

[13:39] if you like, to Job's faith to the point where the greatest devastation of all happens that we read off in verse 18. This great wind, this whirlwind, destroys the house where Job's ten children are feasting.

And every one of them is killed. And yes, while your suffering, and my suffering, whether it's in the current crisis, or maybe as a result of some past event, or even present circumstance of loss, these things may well not be in the same scale as Job's suffering and loss.

God gives testing times in the race, the particular race that He's given you to run. And these are real times of testing, real times of affliction.

And the sufferings, even the providence that God gives you, don't come in some kind of velvet rat comfort. They're real thorns.

They're real thorns of trial. But it's how you respond to these thorny trials. That will indicate the measure of your faith and your trust in the one true God.

[14:55] So let's look then at Job's reaction to that great loss. Let's read again verse 20. 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.

Look at the number of reactions that Job had leading up to this great statement of faith. Look at verse 20. He arose.

Then Job arose. And of course, if you arise, it means that you've been down. You've been not just physically down, but obviously emotionally and just psychologically in your heart, you've been brought low.

And the news that he'd been given of all these grievous losses to the point of the loss of his family. He's grieving. He's in pain. He's in deep pain.

[16:00] But he arises. He doesn't stay lying down. He gets up. He arose. And out of that position of mourning and grieving, he doesn't sink hopelessly.

He's not sinking hopelessly in pain. Yes, he's mourning. He's going to continue to mourn. But he's not going to allow that devastation of his loss to cripple him so that he remains in that crushing misery.

And the devastation of loss that, well, many of you, I know, have known, maybe in the past, even in recent times.

You know that your sorrow is real. But you don't grieve without hope, without hope for a loved one, for one who gave his or her life, in this life, who gave his life to our Lord and Savior.

He, she, who's now beholding the Savior face to face. And that's such a great comfort that God's Word gives to us, that comfort in loss, that comfort in suffering, that, you know, through the ages, the Lord's people have testified to, again and again, with that sure hope of the eternal blessing that God gives to all who are in Christ by faith.

[17:21] Some of you, I know, have been following the response of the well-known Canadian pastor and blogger, Tim Chalice. Tim lost his son, Nick, Nick, age 20, just 12 days ago.

And it's the response of Tim Chalice that really stands out, that it's a testimony to the one who grieves and yet who doesn't grieve without hope. It's a testimony of the believer who knows, yes, knows affliction and deep affliction and knows that that affliction has, yes, been permitted by God and yet can still testify to the goodness of God.

And, you know, just following that particular example, we know that that man and his family, they're grieving, but they've got that comfort of knowing that their young son who ran that short race, but that man is now in glory because he ran that race well.

He, even in that short life, gave testimony to following his Lord and Savior. And Tim Chalice and all who've lost loved ones in whatever circumstances can still say that the Lord gave and the Lord has taken away.

Blessed be the name of the Lord. Maybe even what some of you are going through even at the moment, in particularly difficult times when sorrow is real, but you can still echo even the words of the Apostle Paul when Paul, even through his own experiences, could still testify to the sovereign grace of God and the sovereign purposes of God when he wrote these words in 2 Corinthians 4.

[19:11] We're afflicted in every way, but not crushed. Perplexed, but not driven to despair. Persecuted, but not forsaken.

Struck down, but not destroyed. It's with Paul, it's with Job, and I pray it's with you, that even in your distress, distress doesn't overwhelm your soul.

Well, look at what else, other of Job's reactions. We've seen that he arose, but then he tore his robe, he shaved his head. This was the cultural way, the way at the time of expressing grief and torment.

He grieved. He mourned. He wasn't afraid to show his mourning in public. As we have said earlier, we don't grieve as those who have no hope.

And certainly, Job didn't grieve as someone without hope. We see that in his third reaction, because we're told he fell to the ground in worship. You know, Satan had predicted, and with confidence on his part anyway, he said, if Job loses everything, he's surely going to curse God to God's face.

[20:24] But Job doesn't curse God. Job's arisen. He's torn his robe. He's shaved his head. But he's not cursed God. He's not blamed God for all the various tragedies that have happened in his life.

He's not blamed God for the loss of all his possessions. He's not blamed God for the loss of his family. He's not turned his back in God. He's not refused to have anything more to do with God. What does he do? He falls on his knees. He worships God, because his heart is continually directed to the one true God. Yes, he's a broken man. He's in mourning.

That mourning won't just go away. But what's his response? His response to God is to worship Him. And some might say, and some have said, well, isn't this just a sort of a very cold response, a detached response, somehow just escaping from reality?

Shouldn't he just have cursed God and blamed God and just said that God's been responsible for all my troubles? But Job knew, and so many of the Lord's people know that it was by God's appointment that these tragedies have occurred.

[21 : 44] And so Job responds in worship. He accepts the will of God. He accepts that that will is His only good. As we've read before in verse 21, these great words that God, that Job blesses, even the name of the Lord.

Job's recognized he's got no right to a trouble-free life. He began his life with, as he says, with nothing. He's going to end his life with nothing in the world God's taken away from these things that Job had acquired in life.

And now he's returned to the condition that he was born in. Nothing. He says he's going to end his days with nothing. Well, of course, as we read in the story, that isn't the case. But he's recognizing he's got no rights before God.

He can't demand from God anything just on the basis of some deserving on his own part. But he's remembering that God the Lord did give.

And God the Lord did bless and continues to bless. He's not going to blame God for his losses. He's going to praise God for his goodness and mercy, even when circumstances might appear to the contrary.

[23 : 04] I've got no right to blame God for any tragedy in my own life or in your life, any loss, even in the current world crisis, the crisis that's impacted every country, every continent, even our own church family.

What's our response? What's your response to those things that afflict, even in the passing of a loved one, even through these difficult times? What's our response to the current restrictions? Well, surely it's got to be through a thankful heart as Job expressed that heart before God. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Here's Job in all his humility. Job humbly accepting God's providence and acknowledging that God is sovereign. And even in the depths, even in the darkest nights of the soul, even these times that we just simply cannot understand why God permits particular loss and particular suffering, we're still to trust God for His perfect love and His perfect grace.

And yes, when we do struggle to come to terms with these losses, we turn to the Creator. We turn to the One who has perfect wisdom.

[24 : 29] He sees your grief. He sees your tears. And He bids you come to Me, He says. Find that true solace, that true peace, that true comfort that only God can give.

And we don't charge God with any wrongdoing. You see, we're told in the very last verse of this chapter that Job didn't sin or charge God with wrong.

even the multiple loss, the multiple bereavements. He didn't charge God with wrongdoing, but He found comfort in worshiping the one true God.

And that surely has to be, it must be, your comfort and my comfort, even in this difficult and challenging time or even the circumstances that we have.

We bow in reverence before God who does all things well. And of course, above all, we turn to the Lord Jesus.

[25 : 30] We turn for our strengthening, our encouragement even to the Lord Jesus. Jesus knew loss. Jesus suffered. He suffered in soul. Just read again the suffering of His soul even before His crucifixion.

And then read again of the suffering of His soul on the cross when He's crying out and is sin-bearing, My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? And we have to say with all reverence, if the Father gave His Son to suffer for us, we can't expect a pilgrimage that's suffering free, that's without times of testing.

Your faith is precious. It's precious faith that requires testing and proving and growing. And it's that testing and proving that, again, back to Apostle Paul, Paul rejoiced in.

As we read in Romans 5, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who's been given to us.

I pray that you'll know the love of God in your hearts, that you'll have that Spirit-filled grace that enables you to be strong in faith and strong in love and strong in hope, and yes, even in these testing times, that you'll still come before God and cry out to Him, blessed be the name of the Lord.

[27 : 07] Amen. Let us pray. Our Heavenly Father, we come before You in faith. We come before You acknowledging that You are Lord, and we pray truly that the words of Job will be the words that

we can truly say from the heart.

Blessed be the name of the Lord. So, Lord, fill us, we pray, with that hope, with that faith, with that praise in our hearts as we journey on in our lives, as we journey to our heavenly home.

Hear us, Lord, as we continue in worship before You now, and we pray these things in Your name. Amen.