

Job's Last Stand

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Date: 12 October 2025

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[0 : 0 0] The following message was given at a Sunday celebration at Trinity Grace Church in Athens.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

! How then could I gaze at a virgin?

What would be my portion from God above and my heritage from the Almighty on high? Is not calamity for the unrighteous and disaster for the workers of iniquity? Does not he see my ways and number all my steps?

If I've walked with falsehood and my foot has hastened to the seat, let me be weighed in a just balance and let God know my integrity. If my step has turned aside from the way and my heart has gone after my eyes, if any spot has stuck to my hands, then let me sow and another eat and let what grows for me be rooted out.

If my heart has been enticed toward a woman, if I had lain in wait at my neighbor's door, then let my wife grind for another and let others bow down on her, for that would be a heinous crime and that would be an iniquity to be punished by the judges, for that would be a fire that consumes as far as Abaddon, and it would burn to the root of all my increase.

[1 : 3 0] If I've rejected the cause of my manservant or my maidservant when they brought a complaint against me, what then shall I do when God rises up? When he makes inquiry, what shall I answer him?

Did not he who made me in the womb make him? And did not one fashion us in the womb? If I've withheld anything that the poor desired, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail, or have eaten my morsel alone, and the fatherless has not eaten of it, for from my youth a fatherless grew up with me as with a father, and from my mother's womb I guided the widow.

If I've seen anyone perish for lack of clothing, or the needy without covering, if my body has not blessed me, and if he was not warmed with the fleece of my sheep, if I have raised my hand against the fatherless because I saw my help at the gate, that let my shoulder blade fall from my shoulder, and let my arm be broken from its socket, for I was in terror of calamity from God, and I could not have faced his majesty.

If I've made gold my trust, or called fine gold my confidence, if I've rejoiced because my wealth was abundant, or because my hand had found much, if I've looked at the sun when it shone, or the moon moving in splendor, and my heart has been secretly enticed, and my mouth has kissed my hand, this also would be an iniquity to be punished by the judges, for I would have been false to God above.

If I have rejoiced at the ruin of him who hated me, or exulted when evil overtook him, if I've not let my mouth sin by asking for his life with a curse, if the men of my tent have not said, who is there that has not been filled with his meat, the sojourner has not lodged in the street, I've opened my doors to the traveler, I've concealed my transgressions as others do, by hiding my iniquity in my heart, because I stood in great fear for the multitude, and the contempt of families terrified me, so that I kept silence and did not go out of doors.

[3 : 30] Oh, that I had one to hear me, here's my signature, let the Almighty answer me, oh, that I had the indictment written by my adversary, surely I would carry it on my shoulder, I would bind it on me as a crown, I would give him an account of all my steps, like a prince I would approach him, if my land has cried out against me, and its furrows have wept together, if I've eaten its yield without payment, and made its owners breed their last, let thorns grow instead of wheat, and foul weeds instead of barley, the words of Job are ended.

This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated. In February of 2004, a Harvard college student launched a website from his dorm room that was intended to connect college students with the rest of the campus.

The new website struck a nerve, became popular, and it launched on other college campuses soon after. Two years later, Facebook hit broader audiences and reached more than 50 million users by 2007.

That's just three years from inception. Originally called The Facebook, the social media site began without a like button on the posts.

Though Facebook didn't invent the like button, they did make it popular. And now there's a like button on practically everything. Not just with Facebook, but nearly every other platform and website in the world is using something similar to express approval or affirmation for something.

[5 : 20] What ended up happening, or Facebook launched their button in 2009. And one unintended consequence of the button is that it gave everybody on the platform a quantifiable metric with which to compare themselves.

Good posts got more likes. Popular people got more likes. And what ended up happening, one psychologist said, was that users began to derive a sense of worth based on how they're doing in comparison with others.

Facebook, I think, revealed something that's in the heart of all of us. A desire to be known, to be understood, to be validated.

We want to know that our existence matters. This is why sentiments like, follow your heart, live your truth, do what makes you happy, you only live once, all these things pervade our culture.

We have an obsession with justification. Like the little blue check on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter that confirms your account.

[6 : 26] We want to be verified, validated. We try to convince ourselves that we're good people, that we're enough, but in the end, we're really not so sure.

How do we know? And more importantly, how are we validated and justified in this life? Our main point today is, though the righteous may suffer, God justifies sinners by faith alone.

The reality is that no one escapes pain and suffering, because if you live long enough, we're going to experience trials, and sometimes we suffer because we're Christians, and popularity doesn't make us happier, doesn't ease that pain.

validation from culture doesn't satisfy these things. And answers to life's hardest questions don't come through a life of ease.

Like, Christians' ultimate longing is to be accepted by God, to be justified. Though the righteous may suffer, God justifies sinners by faith alone.

[7 : 36] Last Sunday, we were in the book of Job, and there was a break in the action as the narrator of Job contemplated the nature of wisdom in chapter 28. And in the beginning of chapter 29, 29 through 31 have this tight group.

Job in 29 helps us see what wise living looks like. And yet, by the time we get to 31, it's clear that the wise living doesn't always pay off, as we might expect.

As we're nearing the end of Job, we've come to the last of Job's speeches. The three cycles of poetic arguments between Job as his three friends in the middle, there's this break in the action, and finally, 29 through 31 concludes what Job wants to say.

In legal terms, this is Job's closing arguments. but it's no mere summary. We actually learn more about his present situation and his past.

29 begins with Job again taking up his discourse. He starts in 29 with, Oh, that I were in the months of old. He's most passionate here in these moments.

[8 : 50] He longs to go back to his former life. It appears that it's now been months since Job has lost everything and his body attacked and still no hope comes.

He's waiting. 29 and 30 together stand, they land as the strongest possible contrast. 29's all about the wonderful life he enjoyed.

He recounts the good old days when he enjoyed God's presence. He said, God was my friend. He was respected by everyone in the city. He enjoyed riches and honor, respect.

He was famous. But most of all, he enjoyed God's presence. Then in chapter 30, all of that is gone. All of it. Several times, the words then and now mark those chapters.

Then Job was respected by everyone of all ages. Now, he's hated by all. Then, he was a father to the fatherless, caring for orphans.

[9 : 55] Now, the ones that he cared for turned on him. Then, Job was outrageously generous to the poor and weak. Now, even outcasts of society mock him.

Job was famous even in chapter 30, but not for the ways that anybody wants. It'd be different if people had just left him alone or ignored him or if he still knew that God was his friend.

that'd make things bearable, but neither of these things were true, so Job thought. He was a hurting man, mocked, abused, even spit on. Chapter 30, verse 10 says, he's in pain and misery and he thought that he was abandoned by the Lord.

He dreams of the past and he awakens to sounds of laughter, as one author said. Then, Job had the Lord's guiding presence and generous provision.

Now, everything's taken away and the Lord doesn't answer. God only stares at him. Chapter 30, verse 20 says, just looks at him. No presence, no provision, silence.

[11 : 07] So much has changed for Job. He looks back at happy memories, but he also looks back with pain. He's remembering what he lost.

I think there's a way that we can, we too can look back and remember that brings pain. It's not always helpful. Especially true when it comes to regret.

If we begin to say to ourselves, if only of the past, if only I had done this instead of that, if only I had said this and not that.

If only I'd made that investment. These moments are not useful. They don't serve us. It's fretful remembering. And the Lord would admonish us to press on, to press forward.

But there's also a way of remembering that is good, that is helpful. When we remember God's past faithfulness, it fortifies our faith that he's going to be faithful in the future.

[12 : 09] Over and over again, the Israelites too were commanded to teach the next generation, to help them remember that God had brought them out of slavery. And it seems that Job is remembering, but it's painful.

It's a painful remembering. And these chapters are meant to be tedious, and so after that contrast between 29 and 30, we come to chapter 31 that we just read.

And point number one, God is the judge of the wicked. God's the judge of the wicked. After the terrible description of his present state, Job realizes that the only one who can help him is God.

So this chapter is about laying out his case before God, pleading, asking God, answering him. This is Job's last speech.

We have just a few words afterwards at the end, but this is it. This is the last time we really hear from Job. And he uses language that is emphatic. So, we look at this defense, and we need to spend a moment here on what Job affirms.

[13 : 16] What does he affirm about the nature of God? Well, first he says that God is near. Look there, verse 4. Does he not see my ways and number all my steps?

Psalms 94 says, of the wicked, O Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked exult? And they say, this is what the wicked say, the Lord does not see.

The God of Jacob does not perceive. The wicked say that God overlooks wrongdoing or doesn't care or is not strong enough or not wise enough to see, to perceive. But Job says just the opposite.

He sees. And more than that, he numbers all Job's steps. Verses 4 and 5 have this language of feet walking, steps, his ways, and each step being numbered by the Lord.

He knows that the Lord's paying attention. God's ear is not deaf. He is not blind. God clearly sees what's happening here. So Job says that God is near.

[14 : 23] But he also says that God is just too. The Lord God has the responsibility and the ability and the power to judge sin. I've heard it said that the biggest problem that people face is sin.

But I wonder if we have a bigger problem. And that's that God is good. That's a good thing. God's good. That's a good thing. Well, if God is good, then he must judge sin.

God is too pure to look at evil. He tolerates no wrongdoing. I think most of the time we may have too casual a view of our exceeding wretchedness of sin.

At the same time, we forget that our sin is in the sight of a high and mighty God who charges angels with error. And if God isn't good, then sin is just not that big a deal.

But if God is good and we aren't, then we have a big problem. We're not right in his sight. God. So the Lord has the authority and the ability to judge.

[15 : 32] And Job affirms this. He affirms the truth of the Lord. Look there in verse 6. He says, let me be weighed in a just balance and let God know my integrity.

He reads all of our thoughts and motives and actions. scenes. In ancient Egyptian documents, there's a well-known papyrus, or several of them actually, that depict a judgment scene.

These Egyptian hieroglyphs and there's this divine being that has the head of a dog and the body of a man. These are divine beings in ancient Egypt. And in this one scene, there's this being standing in the middle and there's scales.

And on one side of the scale is a person's heart. heart. On the other side, a feather, an ostrich feather. And if the person's heart has been tainted with sin, then it's heavy and it outweighs the feather and the person's immediately judged.

And people have known for thousands of years that there is a divine judgment. There's a judgment. There's a good judge behind it all. He knows these things, but Job's conscience is clear.

[16 : 45] And so he begins making his case. If we back up to verse 1, he actually begins his argument with the sin of lust, which seems kind of strange.

Why would he do that? While sexual sin is particularly devastating because of its relational consequences, I'm not sure that's why he mentioned it first.

Or maybe because this sums up a life lived in moral purity. That could be it, but I'm not so sure that's the reason either. Most of all, I think he says it here because the Bible has a strong connection between sexual immorality and sexual purity and religious purity.

God likens the sin of idolatry to adultery. So the Israelites, when they're chasing after other gods, the Lord calls them adulterers.

They've strayed from their first love, the one who is devoted to them. So right from the beginning, Job saying, I'm no idolater. He's making a case here.

[17 : 58] But it's interesting. So the rest of this, you can see these are negative vows. But the first one, it's not a vow that he didn't do something, which is how the rest of it's built.

Instead, he's making a positive commitment. Verse 1, it said, I've made a covenant with my eyes. He made a vow, a commitment to himself and to the Lord.

Job feared the Lord. And all of what the Lord has done for him, Job committed himself to obedience. And so for some of us, that's a helpful thought, that commitment.

I know for me, for a long time, commitment was like a four-letter word. Do we see commitment as bad? Job doesn't. He makes a moral commitment to self-control.

I wonder how many times do we fall into sin because we have no commitments. We're not absolutely committed to obeying the Lord.

[19 : 01] Often we disobey, not for lack of knowledge, but for lack of commitment. we focus too much time and attention and maybe our prayers on non-moral decisions.

Scripture, what I mean is Scripture doesn't tell us whether we should go to college at Liber University or LSU. Or Tennessee. It doesn't say if we should marry this Christian man or that Christian woman.

God isn't explicit whether we should take a job in biology in Oregon or be an engineer in Florida. And it's not as if these things don't matter, but that isn't what the Lord cares about most.

Kevin DeYoung has helpfully said, the most important issues for God are moral purity, theological fidelity, compassion, joy, our witness, faithfulness, hospitality, love, worship, and faith.

Kind of sounds like what we just read in Job. These are his big concerns. The problem is that we tend to focus most of our attention on everything else. We obsess over the things that God has not mentioned and may never mention, while by contrast we spend little time on all the things that God has already revealed to us in the Bible.

[20 : 17] The commands are clear. We often know what the Lord desires, but sometimes we just hope for the best. It's like a we'll see kind of approach.

It's not a godly way to approach the commands of the Lord. And so I wonder if sometimes we fall into temptation because we give ourselves a way out.

That's especially true in the area of sexual lust. So what do we need to be committed to? What do we need to commit ourselves to? We want to do it half-heartedly.

We want to commit to following the Lord. Don't give yourself an out or let yourself off the hook. Moral and relational commitments are good. Job knew it and he kept them. And so Job goes into this systematic argument that he's innocent and it lasts the rest of the chapter.

So point two, God is judge of the righteous. God is judge of the righteous. Job makes seven or so different types of confessions depending on how you break it up.

[21 : 29] Some commentators say that these disavowments are the pinnacle of the moral ethic in the Old Testament. Like this is how we are to conduct ourselves in the world. And it's meant to remind us of the Ten Commandments.

Even though Job was no Israelite and the law was probably written after Job, you hear these echoes of the commandments in Job's defense.

The law was written on his heart. And these verses have this repeated phrase of if, then, this conditional clause, if I've done these things, then may God strike me dead kind of thing.

Job says if 16 times. He's calling down a curse on himself if he's actually done these things. And you see a couple of things in the nature of how he's wording this.

First you see that Job is rooting his actions in a heart religion. Job obeys because he fears the Lord.

[22 : 32] He obeys because he loves the Lord. Look there in verse 14. What shall I do when God rises up? When he makes inquiry, what shall I answer him?

If Job disobeyed the Lord, how could he face God? And again in verse 23 it says, for I was in terror of calamity from God. I could not have faced his majesty.

Job lives his life in purity and he conducts his life in such a way that he has God in mind. He's thinking of the Lord as he's obeying. He's not just trying to win approval.

He's in light of what the Lord has done. I want to obey the Lord. He considers God in what he does. And second, we also notice that Job is active. He's got this heart doing to others what he would want them to do to him.

He's obeying the great commandment and the golden rule. Those commands in action. The language is framed in the negative, but he's active.

[23 : 41] He's committed to sexual purity, verses 1-12, including adultery. He has a pattern of just treatment to his employees in verses 13-15.

He has active service to the poor and fatherless in 16-23, all different kinds of ways. He rejects idols, especially the idol of wealth, 24-28.

He lives to please God and not man in 33-34, and he is righteous in all of his business dealings, verses 38-40.

He's active in all these ways. He's no monk excluded for society, living in isolation. He's actively pursuing others. Romans 12-9 says, let love be genuine.

But I love the way that the New Living Translation puts it. It says, don't just pretend to love others, really love them. That's a helpful way of saying that. In other words, I think we can passively just tolerate people and overlook others and then just be content that we're not harming people.

[24 : 53] We think that that's love, but it's not. Love pursues. It engages. It's even difficult at times. Love pursues others. And so this is Job's ethic. He's not like one of these icebergs that, you know, you see the top of the iceberg and below you have this huge portion of the piece of ice that's under the water that's hidden.

There's nothing hidden in Job. There's no secret sin. He's living in the light, as 1 John says. So these ethics, oh my goodness, it's so much.

Proverbs 31, the Proverbs 31 woman is known by many as just this impeccable standards for women. I think women can look at that and oh my goodness, it's so overwhelmed.

I wonder if those verses have plagued women for years. It's so hard to live up to. And so Job 31 is similar. This is the standard of men in many ways. These standards are impeccable and he's vowed, I've not done these things.

He's kept himself pure. But what on earth is going on with him defending himself? I think sometimes we look at innocent suffering and we think, yeah, but he's still a sinner.

[26 : 04] He still deserves death. Aren't the wages of sin still death? If someone were to ask Job, how you doing Job?

Could he or should he still say, better than I deserve? That's a good thing to say. Could he still say that? I think in one sense, yeah, maybe, but too often I think we're just like Job's friends.

We don't have a category for innocent suffering. What I mean is Job did nothing to deserve what happened to him. He has in some ways a right to defend himself.

While Job was in the storm, God was standing above the storm looking down and God's disposition toward his servant Job was unchanged. This is my servant Job.

God's argument to Satan was that what Job does indeed love me for my sake, not because of outward blessings. And so Job's confused. He's confused because the world doesn't work as it should.

[27 : 17] He's going through life, examining his life, trying to figure out why is God against me? He says I'm pure in my dealings here. My heart's not lifted up.

He's not claiming to be sinless. Look there in verse 33 actually. I've concealed my transgressions as others do.

He's not hiding his sin. He's not hiding transgressions. He says I'm actually quick to repent when I do sin. He's not like Adam in the garden of Eden who hid himself when he sinned against the Lord.

And so let's not forget that in the midst of this trial what pains Job the most is loss of friendship with God. Job never asks to be restored to his honor.

He doesn't ask to be given his wealth back or his friends to apologize to him. No, he wants God. He longs for friendship with God again. He can't stop talking about it all through this book.

[28 : 22] In a way though Job is kind of contradicting himself. He desires the Lord but he's demanding a response from the Lord. In legal terms he wants to know the charge against him.

What are you charging me with? And he puts God on the stand. Verse 35. Very emphatic. Oh that I had one to hear me.

Here's my signature. Let the Almighty answer me. Oh that I had the indictment written by my adversary. Do you see what Job gets wrong here?

Let the Almighty answer me. Where's the indictment written by my adversary? He thinks that God's his enemy. Actually God's his only true friend.

His friends are not that great of friends. What Job gets wrong is who his adversary really is. Job claims that it's God that caused him to fall but God's not his enemy.

[29 : 28] Job also forgets who he's talking to. He said let the Almighty answer me the holy majestic creator the God to whom we must give an account.

And he forgets no wrongdoing. He forgets that there is no wrongdoing in God. And so he has it's like a syllogism. I remember in school these syllogisms but he's got false logic.

This is true of God. This is what happened but he comes to a logical fallacy. There must be something wrong in God. And he misses it. But isn't it just like God to defy our logic?

In many ways the Lord knows us nothing. But he's kind and generous. And in the end Job does have to repent. Not because his sin caused this calamity that's been happening through the book.

But because his response was not true. And the Lord just wants him to hold on. The Lord just wants him to hold on.

[30 : 33] To stay a Christian if I can put it that way. That's it. In inexplicable suffering it is good to ask what sin is there that the Lord might be putting his finger on.

It's good to ask that question because that may be. It's good to consider how would the Lord have me to grow as a believer. That's a good question we need to ask. But there's a third possibility and it's that God's pleased with me and I just don't have all the answers.

God's pleased with Job. He's not trying to teach Job anything. He's innocent. He's not justified because of his deeds but his sin isn't causing this pain either.

So if that's you, it's good to cry. It's good to entreat God, to seek understanding but ultimately to entrust the soul, your soul into the loving hands of the God who is your true friend.

Inexplicable suffering, don't curse God, remain a Christian. Eric Ortlund said, God will sometimes allow his saints to fall into position where it looks as if he's completely given up on them or does not love them anymore.

[32 : 00] This is only an appearance. God's heart is, if I can put it this way, he writes, unchangingly, unstintingly proud of his children.

But a major part of the wisdom of the book of Job is to warn us ahead of time that there will be times when we find ourselves asking, what concrete evidence do I have that God actually loves me?

I treat my own children better than God treats me. Just as the speeches of Job's friends teach us to be suspicious about our tendency to blame, so Job's speeches prevent us from making quick assumptions about God's heart toward us in suffering.

That's helpful. We want to be slow to make accusations to one who is suffering. We want to be slow to assume certain things about God when we are suffering.

I read a story about a man who was wrongfully imprisoned for 48 years. He was imprisoned for almost 50 years.

[33 : 04] He was declared innocent. It was clear from the evidence that they went back and reviewed he did not do this crime. It was murder. He was on death row for a while. He did not commit this crime. He was released two years ago.

And right after he got released or right around the time, cancer. He got cancer. I think terminal cancer. He's a Christian. He's a Christian man.

He said his faith was like a rubber band. You know, at times it was stretched. But it would always go back. He's trusting the Lord. He said he always knew he'd be released. Wrongfully imprisoned.

And currently he's still, he says he's fighting bitterness. He's committed to not wallow in it. And this man has found what his root cause is for joy.

A man who's been wrongfully imprisoned for 50 years. He's found what his root is in joy. What is the bottom of his joy? And it's the Lord. He has the Lord.

[34 : 04] Those are hard things. But what's the bottom of our joy? What? What? What? I think it is possible at times that people can get into a relationship with God for something else.

Sometimes comfort or happiness. It's as if God can be a means to something that we perceive as better. And certainly our faith can be stretched but we don't want to be like the rocky soil in Mark 4 where a person who has no root when trials come and so they fall away.

And so when terrible inexplicable things happen we learn something about our relationship with the Lord. And if we lose everything but God God is enough.

The Lord is enough. Philippians 3 Paul counts all of his accolades all the things that he's accomplished in life as rubbish so that he may know Christ.

He says in Philippians 3 indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ to be found in him not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law but that which comes through faith in Christ.

[35 : 25] The righteousness from God that depends on faith. Depends on faith. Job tells us how to live but our true righteousness is in Christ.

Point three God declares sinners right. God declares sinners right. Job understands again how the world is supposed to work.

A person who does not believe in God has no ultimate morality to appeal to. Right or wrong doesn't exist and Job is no atheist. He knows how things ought to work.

In the book of Proverbs and the book of Job are both in the genre of wisdom literature and in many ways they balance each other out. Proverbs looks at how the world typically works.

There's a principle of retribution at work there. Like you reap righteous is delivered from trouble and the wicked walks into it instead.

[36 : 40] Proverbs 4 the way of the wicked is like deep darkness. They do not know over what they stumble. Proverbs 9 says the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge of the Holy One is inside for by me your days will be multiplied and years added to your life.

Really? Job was righteous was he delivered from trouble? No. No he wasn't. In Job that retribution principle is busted.

Good doesn't always lead to good and bad doesn't always lead to bad. It's turned upside down. In this life good actions don't always have good outcomes. In the end it does.

The Lord always sorts things out in the end. But blameless and upright people sometimes suffer. That's what the Lord is trying to get at!! Job and his friends knew that the truth that sin does ultimately lead to suffering.

But they took it to the next level. They said if you suffer then you must have sinned. And this is just not always true. Personal sin again is not the only reason for suffering in this world.

[37 : 56] And so I think we have to ask was Job justified in God because of his exemplary moral behavior? How do we read this?

What's he saying here? Even though he's going through the moral law and declaring himself to be blameless there's something missing and we know it. Even though Job was blameless there was no sin in his life that led to the suffering.

We live in a sin sick world. And if this moral righteousness is all that Job had and he's condemned to hell. We can't fall into the trap of thinking that what we do will qualify us for the kingdom of heaven.

It doesn't. Ultimately, it's Job's faith that justifies him. And there's this odd echo of justification by faith here. Job says that there's nothing that he's done to deserve this kind of treatment.

And in one way, Job is getting what he doesn't deserve. And if we're justified by faith alone, then the sinner also doesn't get what they deserve.

[39 : 06] They get what they don't deserve. In an ultimate sense, we all deserve the wrath of God, but the sinner is justified by faith alone, getting what we don't deserve.

Romans 3 says it helpfully. But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

There is no distinction for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Job is demanding an indictment or a vindication. God, bring your charges to me. I want to see it. What do you have against me?

If it's nothing, then vindicate me. Deliver me from this suffering. But he gets neither one, at least not yet. We have to wait just a little longer. And he says again in verse 35 and 36, oh that I had that indictment written by my adversary.

[40 : 12] Surely I would carry it on my shoulder. I'd bind it on me as a crown. If he were guilty, he'd wear it. He'd own it. Ultimately, God is able to forgive Job's accusations, which he does later repent of, and all of his sins, because the father looks forward to a day when someone did carry the indictment of God on their shoulder.

When sin entered the world, there was an accusation written against all of mankind. God is just. He's the just judge. And as Romans 3, 26 says, he's also the justifier.

God is the holy, just, righteous God who by no means overlooks sin, yet he is the one who justifies the wicked. The indictment that belonged to each of us fell on the Son of God.

The cross of Christ became the indictment of God. He willingly took it. The Father became the adversary of the Son. Isaiah 53 says, it was the will of the Lord to crush him, Jesus.

He put him to grief so that we could be freed. Jesus carried the cross on his shoulder. He wore a crown of thorns on his brow for us, for you.

[41 : 26] So where is justification found? How are we right in God's sight? Is it by living the kind of life that Job lived? Romans 8 has the answer. It says, what shall we say of these things?

If God is for us, who can be against us? As Walt quoted this morning, he who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him? Graciously give us all things.

It is God who justifies. It is God, it's like rest my case, God who justifies. It is not our works that make us right with God, it is God who justifies.

Job didn't get what he deserved in the sense that his suffering wasn't a result of sin, but those who are in Christ also don't get what they deserve, because the just punishment of our sin ultimately fell on Christ so that he could show us everlasting mercy.

And when we stand before the Lord in heaven, we're not going to say, oh God, give me what I deserve. We're going to say, oh God, please be merciful.

[42 : 35] Hardships give us good reason to be troubled, but so God gives us a better reason to trust him. We look to the cross of Christ.

Though the righteous may suffer, God justifies sinners by faith alone. Let's pray. Oh Lord, we look to you. We know we have none but you alone.

You are the author and finisher of our faith, and you're the one who justifies us. God, we trust not in our works, we trust not in our good deeds.

We thank you that we can please you, Lord, that in Christ you look down from heaven and are satisfied, Lord. You see Christ in us.

I pray that you would help us, Lord. Help us to walk in a way that is worthy of you, Lord. Help us to see our own sin and to endure when inexplicable suffering happens.

[43 : 35] Would you fortify our faith and be glorified in us? We pray in Christ's name. Amen. You've been listening to a message at a Sunday celebration at Trinity Grace Church in Athens.

For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at trinitygraceathens.com.