

Conscious Commitment; God can be trusted

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[0 : 00] I was the eldest of seven brothers, and whenever we had something new, you know, you could guarantee one brother, it was normally Savan, and he would say, well, I'd wonder if you did this to it, would it break?

And he would do it, and it would break. And you think, well, at least it satisfied your wondering. You know, there are limits to everything.

I can remember Dr. Ransfield, who was a brilliant, or she still is a brilliant doctor, and she said the mind is like an elastic band.

If it's understretched, you have problems. If it's overstretched, you have problems. It needs to go in and out. But even an elastic band has limits, and the mind has limits as well.

Well, scripture is full of examples of God knowing your limits. But when you read the account of Job, you think, well, hang on, Lord, your view of my limits and my view of my limits seems to be different.

[1 : 06] And that brings great challenge to the Christian life, because sometimes we think that we can be overstretched or are being overstretched by God. The striking thing about all of this is, one, Job never knows why he suffers.

He has no idea why he suffers the things that he does. But he does attribute it to God. Isn't God the God who gives and the God who takes away?

Shall we receive this from God and not that from God? He doesn't understand why he's suffering.

He doesn't understand that it's actually the work of Satan ordained by God. But he attributes it all to God.

Why? Because God is in control of everything. So his theology is perfect. But Job, like us and perhaps like many other people, failed to understand that when God looks at our limitations and we look at our limitations, that they are actually different.

And Job, the story of Job, when you get to the end, is what looks like complete loss at the end, at the beginning rather, everything is restored at the end. And the trouble that we have as Christians is that we can't help but not see the positives in tomorrow, what God can do within the course of one day.

[2 : 28] But that can also work the other way. Shall God give good and not evil? Which shall it be? In other words, tomorrow can either bring great blessing that can transform the last year, or it can bring sorrow that can actually devastate the next few years.

The issue at hand here is what kind of person will you be when that day comes? Now, I've already said in other sermons that there are some blessings that God will not give to Christians because it takes a certain amount of prayer to be able to handle those blessings.

And God looks at a limitless or a life that has limited prayer and thinks, well, I cannot hand out those blessings to them because they won't be able to handle them. It's a bit like giving a child several hundred pounds.

They just will not know what to do with it. They will waste a lot of it, and so you need to hold back and give out proportionately until the child is of an age where they're able to understand value and blessing and what to do with it.

Well, Christians are no different. Okay, Job is a blessed man, but you'll notice that the blessings that it speaks of that Job has comes after the description of Job, that he is a man who is blameless, upright, who fears God and turns away from evil.

[3 : 50] Then it begins to speak about his blessings. Okay? Now, it is true that faithfulness begets prosperity, but it is also true, as God may have said, that the daughter devours the mother.

Meaning that faithfulness can lead to many blessings, but when you enjoy those blessings more than God, that will destroy your faithfulness in God. Okay? And how many of us, when life is good, forget God?

Well, all of us forget God when life is good. There is, it's not an exception. We all forget God when life is good. Job doesn't, it seems. But the general principle is that we all do.

The issue here is that Job's life in these couple of chapters or so reflects almost everything that a human life can go through, at least a believer's life can go through.

First, you have your own personal relationship with God. And then if you're in a family, you have your relationship with God concerning your children. Then you have the fact that God takes notice of all of that.

[4 : 55] Then you've got the introduction of Satan, which means that Christians ought to know by now that we don't wrestle against flesh and blood. In other words, our problems are not merely earthly.

Okay? Now, money can cause a lot of problems, or the lack of money can cause a lot of problems. Health, that is the lack of health, can actually cause you problems. And all of these are issues.

But Christians understand that they're not the only things that we wrestle against. We have to wrestle against things that are of a spiritual nature. In other words, Satan is real.

Spiritual powers and authorities are equally real. And they cause problems to the believer's life.

Job's life goes through having much to having nothing.

He loses his riches in many ways because they're of no use to him. And they're gone anyway. He then loses his children. So you have the loss of family.

[5 : 56] But then you have the pain of that loss. And that's a different issue there. Having lost or losing your family is one thing. Having the pain of that loss is another thing entirely.

It compounds the loss. And then he loses his wife. Not because his wife passes away. But his wife tells him to curse God and die. Well, that's a serious marital problem.

Okay? That's not something easy to deal with. You know, the one person you would expect to receive comfort from after all this trouble would be your wife.

Or, you know, it could be the other way around. It just so happens to be that Job is this way around. And then suddenly she turns around and says she will curse God and die.

Now, I know of a woman who gave her testimony. And so this isn't secret. And she married a man who believed in God. And she believed in God.

[6 : 52] And one morning he simply walked into the bedroom having been downstairs drinking coffee or something and says, Do you know what? I don't love God anymore. And neither you. So these things, okay?

These things can change dramatically. Now, who's prepared for something like that? Well, Job thought, hey, perhaps my wife is with me. And then all of a sudden his wife turns against him.

So I'm under no illusion that this book can be difficult for believers for different reasons. But the issue at hand is if God is in control of everything, can he be trusted?

That's the question. If God is in control of everything, can he be trusted? In other words, when life falls apart, what can I hold on to and what will hold on to me?

Well, the answer to both of those questions of what will I hold on to and what will hold on to me is the same for the believer. And the answer is God. Okay? Job holds on to God.

[7 : 58] He holds to his integrity. He holds on to God. He understands God clearly. But he also understands that God, in the end of the book, Job has to repent at the end of the book, which tells you that he had something to repent of.

Okay? And it's at the end of the book where he understands that God's plans cannot be thwarted and God has hold of him. So the question in hand is not whether or not God can hold on to me.

That should go without questioning. Now, you can question it if you like, but the answer that you're always going to come back to is, yeah, God always has hold of you. The question here is whether or not you will hold on to God.

But how do I hold on to God? Through faith and through faith alone. Simply by believing who God is, believing his character, believing what he has said, believing what he has done.

So the issue here for Job is not whether or not God will hold on to him, but whether or not he will hold on to God. And as we see, he does.

[9 : 00] So this morning, I want us to focus briefly on the life of Job as something to look at and something to follow. Or rather, someone to follow.

In order to understand Job's life, you have to understand Job's character. And this is his character in verse 1. He is a blameless man, upright, fears God, and he turns away from evil.

Because he is this way, he is ready to face tomorrow. Because he doesn't know what tomorrow will bring. You'll then notice when trouble does come, he is emotionally torn apart with the loss of his family, which we didn't read but we mentioned.

But then in verse 20, he continues to worship God. Then in chapter 2, verse 9, Job suffers again. And he suffers with his wife turning around to him and says, curse God and die.

Now here's the lesson. Here's the important lesson here. That God sees something in Job that Satan doesn't see. And God sees something in Job that his wife doesn't see.

[10 : 11] So God takes Job through what he does and Satan can't see that Job will remain faithful to God. And his wife can't see that Job will remain faithful to God.

They both fail to see in Job what God sees in Job. And it's out of his integrity does he turn around to his wife and answer her, even though she has said, curse God and die.

The issue here is one of conscious commitment on Job's part. One of conscious commitment. He turns away from evil.

He trusts God. Let me give you an illustration of the difference between conscious commitment and regular church attendance. Okay? There's a big difference between the two.

And all of you know this, so I don't really need to explain it to you, because perhaps you do it all the time. You will recognize the difference if you travel the same journey all the time.

[11 : 12] And the difference is you know that when you travel from one location to another location repetitively, and you have to do it again and again and again and again, you know after a time being that you always go past that building on the right, you always go over that roundabout at the end of the road, you always turn left here and right there, and then you go down into the dip and up the other side, and then you are where you are.

You know that. But then there are those times where you get to a certain location, perhaps on the other side of the roundabout, without ever remembering going over the roundabout. There are those times when you go through the set of traffic lights without ever actually consciously remembering that you've gone through the set of traffic lights, even though you know the only way you could be there is if you went through them.

And sometimes you can get all the way back to your front door thinking, I know I needed to have turned right there. I know I needed to have turned left there. I just can't remember doing it. And suddenly you find yourself at your front door almost unconsciously there, but consciously there. And only at that point do you look back and think, I can't remember my journey. That's what you would call an unconscious habit. In other words, you've done it so often, that even though your senses are able to keep you out of danger, by and large, by and large, most of it bypasses you because now you no longer take notice of it.

Even though you make the same journey every day, now you no longer take any notice of it. The Christian life cannot be lived that way. And so a lot of people come to church with unconscious habits.

[12 : 45] They do this, they do that, they go away, but then they can't remember anything. They know they must have sung. They know they must have heard a sermon. They know that they must have read at least from the Bible a couple of times, or at least, but halfway through, I have no idea.

The reason you have no idea is because you've got yourself into an unconscious habit. You're motionless in motion. There is no conscious thought.

Now, Job is not like that. Job understands that the Christian life, in order to be lived correctly, has to be habitual, but it has to be consciously aware.

In other words, if it's to be done at all, it is to be done with a conscious commitment. I have to be fully engaged in the things that I sing, I have to be fully engaged in the things that I pray, I have to be fully engaged in the whole of life, or else it just passes me by.

I know what's gone, but I just don't remember doing it. Well, no life is benefited in that way. Here's an example, and the first example is his children.

[13 : 49] You'll notice in verse 5, that the family get to enjoy a feast together, and the impression is, that his children holds, his children holds these meals, and everybody else gets to go out to a

different house every night.

This is what I'm planning, when they're older. Whose house are we at tea for tonight? I'm going to love it. And then you go around, and at the end of the week, Job does something quite spectacular, or normal, I should say, and he says this.

He offers burnt offerings to God, for he said, it may be that my children have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. What is he doing? Well, Job is not only concerned with his own spiritual walk before God, he's concerned with his children's spiritual walk before God.

In the same way Nehemiah prayed for his brothers in the nation, even though they wouldn't pray for themselves at the beginning of Nehemiah, Job does exactly the same thing here for his children.

In other words, he understands that if his children offend God, that's a serious issue, and I must step in at that point. Now that doesn't remove the children's responsibility to confess their own sin, to repent and believe and to follow God.

[15:05] It doesn't remove that, but how are they to learn it? How are children to learn what conscious commitment looks like to the Lord if they don't see it anywhere? Well, they do see it somewhere.

They see it in their father, who gathers up these offerings, go out and burns them to the Lord, in case his children have cursed God in their hearts. In other words, he leads the way. He leads the family home.

It doesn't bypass him. In other words, he takes responsibility on himself, recognizing that God is involved in all. He is a conscious father, and he is conscious of the things that offend God.

And he seeks to meet those measures. He's leading the home by example. At this point, I feel completely inadequate as a father.

But then I recognized that Job's not actually doing anything that any father couldn't do. It's simply being conscious. Conscious of what God expects regarding a father towards his family.

[16:11] That's all that it is. And then the father's responsibility to model that to his children, and then the children's following responsibility to do that for themselves eventually, at some point, sooner rather than later.

Job is a man who is blameless and upright. He trusts God, and he turns away from evil. That's what he's modeling. He's consciously committed to God.

He doesn't just let it pass him by. What does this mean? Well, in short, it means this. That if you are to be ready for tomorrow, and whatever tomorrow brings, you need to be ready today for tomorrow. That's what it means. In order for you to be ready for tomorrow, and you don't know what tomorrow will bring, you need to be ready today for tomorrow.

And the only way to be ready today for tomorrow when you don't know what tomorrow will bring is to be blameless, upright, trusting God, and turning away from evil. That's the only way you can be ready. Because the issue here is not the reaction.

[17:16] The issue here is not the reaction to the loss of children. The issue here is not the reaction to ill health. The issue here is not even the reaction to losing your wife, because she says, curse God and die.

The true issue here is, how do I handle those things? How can I not fall apart when life wants to tear me apart?

How can I hold all things together when life wants to tear everything apart? What do I do in those situations when everything's happening around me and I am powerless to stop any of it?

Well, there's only one thing that you can do. And that is the one thing that you can do. And that is to hold on to God. So we go back to our original question.

In a world where God controls everything, can God be trusted? In a world where there is material kind of troubles, where there are physical kind of troubles, that is health kind of troubles, material being money, where there are emotional troubles, that could be, let's say, anything from depression to, you know, severe loss and you cannot get over it.

[18:38] But then there are spiritual troubles. Job suffers almost on every single level of these. And yet he trusts God. But why does he trust God?

Well, Job teaches us that trusting God has nothing to do with what you face in the world. It has to do with who God is. And Job trusts God in the good times and that makes him ready for the bad times.

He understands God when life is good and then he also understands God when life isn't so good. You see, God saw in Job what Satan didn't.

Satan looked at God and says, look, the only reason he's faithful is because he has no reason not to be. He has everything. He has the material things. He has the house. He has the family. He has the big house in the country with all the animals outside that the children can play with.

How could a man be anything else but faithful? And God, knowing that Job was not faithful for those reasons, said to Satan, we'll take it from him then.

[19 : 44] Because God saw in Job what Satan couldn't, God saw in Job that Job was not faithful for those reasons. Now, Satan thought he was faithful for those reasons. That's why you put a protective hedge around him and God says, fine, take it away.

And what you will see is you'll see a man who's not faithful for those reasons. That's the issue. Job remains faithful when the reasons that Satan thinks he is faithful for are removed.

Then his faithfulness means that he must be faithful for another reason. It doesn't have to do with what he has. It has to do with who God is, who he has. So in that sense, it does have to do with who he is.

And it's the same with Job's wife. She fails to see in her husband what God sees. God sees a man full of integrity and his wife doesn't. How can you hold fast to your integrity, she says.

Curse God and die. Do you know what? When me and my wife argue, you know, pastors are not perfect.

[20 : 49] I used to be. No, I'm just kidding. Yeah, I can remember a guy called Tim Bailey saying, do you know what? The issue, we call arguments in marriage trouble in paradise.

Because that's what it should be. It should always be paradise, but then you can have trouble in paradise. And Tim Bailey said this, the issue is not whether or not you quarrel.

You will quarrel. The issue is whether or not you can keep it a lover's quarrel. That's the issue. Can you? Well, not always.

Because it's the sin, right? But that's the issue. The issue is not whether or not you'll quarrel. The issue is not whether or not you'll fear loss and get lost. The issue is not whether or not you will become unhealthy one day or endure physical pain.

That's not the issue. The issue is whether or not you'll continue to love God in those issues. That's the issue. Because these things will come. And the only way for me to be ready for tomorrow, when they come, is to be ready today for tomorrow.

[21 : 54] Does God see in you what nobody else does? As we conclude, I want to conclude with a practical lesson. And the lesson is this, being ready.

If I am to be ready for tomorrow, I need to be ready today for tomorrow. Because that is the only way I'm going to be ready for tomorrow. There is no other way.

And trusting God and turning away from evil is more important than you might think. Now, God could have prevented Job from going through any of this.

He could not have ordained. Or he could have ordained that Job didn't go through any of it. But that was Satan's accusation. Remember, Satan's accusation is he's faithful because he doesn't have to go through anything.

And God is like, no, that's not the reason. So Satan can do anything that he like apart from take Job's life. And suddenly, Job remains faithful.

[22 : 59] And here I am, standing here, and in the week studying it, thinking, well, that's great, but I'd rather not learn the lesson. I'd rather not learn the lesson.

Will I be faithful tomorrow? Will I be faithful in 10 years' time? Will I always be faithful to my wife? Will I always be faithful to my children?

Will I always be faithful? When I know that I can have moments of unfaithfulness now. Will I stand? Well, only by grace do I stand.

Only by trusting God and turning away from evil. And knowing that God has hold of me, and God knows my limitations. God sees in all of us what we fail to see in each other.

Okay? God sees in all of us what we fail to see in others. And that's why God can be trusted. That's why God can take us through things, because he knows our limitations.

[24 : 01] He knows that he has hold of us. He knows where he can take us and how far he can take us. And we, like Job, don't. We don't know any of that. Not a bit.

The whole of life involves God. But more importantly, the whole of life involves a relationship with God. Notice the difference between Job and his wife.

Now, up to the point where Job actually got personally unwell, his wife went through everything that her husband went through. They went through the same things. They lost the same children. They lost the same...

Everything else that they had, the loss was exactly the same up until the point where Job started to suffer physically. They lost the same things.

So why does Job respond one way and his wife responds the other? Now, we want to say, well, people respond differently to different things. That's not the issue. Of course, people respond differently to different things.

[24 : 59] The issue is, is how should I respond to the things that I face? The reason why Job responded the way he did and the reason why his wife responded the way she did was to do with the type of relationship they had with the Lord before anything happened.

Okay? For his wife to be in a position where she says what she says, then, then that indicates that there's something wrong with her relationship with God before anything happens.

And the reason why Job is able to remain faithful afterwards is because of his faithfulness being there in the first place. That was Satan's accusation. He's only faithful because of this reason and God says, you must be kidding.

Not on your life. So the difference between Job and his wife was not down to the fact that they are different people. They are different people.

That goes without question. Neither is it down to the fact that they face different things. They didn't. They face the same thing. The issue at hand was to do with their relationship with God. One was ready to face tomorrow because they were ready today and the other one wasn't.

[26 : 07] So here's the final thought. When your life changes and it will. Okay, when your life changes tomorrow, the next day, whenever it is, and it will.

Or whether these changes are actually with your children or even with your wife or with your husband. Whatever the changes are when they come, what will your response be?

Well, I don't know. But what I do know is if you want to be able to be ready for tomorrow, whatever tomorrow brings, you need to be ready today for tomorrow.

And the only way to be ready today is to trust the God who is in control of everything, even in control of every tomorrow. So the lesson here is trusting a God who knows everything, trusting a God who is in control of everything.

And here's the exhortation. Simple. You need to be, as a Christian, consciously committed. not habitually, unconsciously, but consciously committed to the Lord daily.

[27 : 13] That's how you will be ready today for tomorrow. Amen. Amen. Know then that the God that you hold on to will never let go of you.

You have been sealed in Christ with the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption, safe and secure. Father, we thank you for this. In Jesus' name. Amen.