

Considering the Glory of God

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[0 : 00] find your way to Job, Job chapter 38. If you open your Bible in the middle and you get to Psalms, then you just turn back towards the beginning and you'll be almost there.

I'm going to read a few verses out of Job 38 and into the other sections of Scripture, but we're going to take up our main reading just in these few verses of Job chapter 38.

What I'm going to be addressing this evening is a carry on from last Sunday evening and then of course Wednesday evening, considering the glory of God and how God is at work in the lives of his people. This is a slightly different message, but it all connects. So if you haven't heard the previous two, it doesn't matter quite so much, but for those of you who have, then you'll understand hopefully how it's all connected. So Job 38, beginning at verse 1, and we're just going to read to just a few verses down and then into 14, 41 and that. So Job 38, now hear God's word.

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said, Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Dress for action like a man.

I will question you and you will make it known to me. Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me if you have understanding. Who determines its measurements? Surely, you know, or who stretched the line upon it. If you want to just turn over to Job 40.

[2 : 03] And verse 1 is really the end of Job 39, which says, And the Lord said to Job, verse 2, shall a fault finder contend with the Almighty. He who argues with God, let him answer it.

Then in verse 8 of Job 40, it says this, Will you even put me in the wrong? Will you condemn me that you may be in the right? And then in Job 42, verse 1, Then Job answered the Lord and said, I know that you can do all things and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge? Therefore, I have uttered what I did not understand. Things too wonderful for me which I did not know.

Well, that's going to be the focus of our attention. And if you don't know the book of Job too well, don't worry too much. I'll fill in as much as needed for this message. But before we come back to it, let's, Sunday evening, I was addressing how everything was for the glory of God. That God created this world in the same way that a carpenter would create a window for the same purpose, that you create a window to be able to let light in and to be able to see through it. You know, that's a key purpose for a window. And when God created the world, he created the world in the same way like a window that worked to be able to see through things to the glory of God. So the heavens declare the glory of God. You ought not just to be able to see beautiful landscapes and stars in the sky and conclude, wow, that's wonderful. You ought to be able to see through that and conclude, well, isn't God glorious? And of course, if you can't see through that and see that, then this is what Jesus was addressing about being spiritually blind. Jesus heals the blind man to prove a point about not just the leaders of the day, but of all people of the day, that we really ought to be able to look through and see something other. So for instance, when you look at a person who doesn't belong to Jesus, what should you be seeing? Well, you really ought to be seeing sort of the same thing that you would see in a broken lamp. And that is, it's not achieving or fulfilling the purpose for which it was made. It is not shining out. It is not declaring anything. And the life is supposed to give glory to God. But an unbelieving life, a life trapped in sin, just cannot do that. Job went through quite a lot of affliction. None of us have had the trials of Job, so it would be wrong, I think, to say, boy, you're going through the trials of Job. I don't think any of us are even close to what Job went through. But Job did go through a lot, and Job had tons of questions. He never stopped questioning God. You know, he didn't suffer patiently. He was forever questioning God. I don't think asking God questions is wrong. I think what is wrong is what Job did with the answers to the questions. And that is, he drew conclusions ahead of time. And there's a big danger, isn't there, when you draw conclusions ahead of time, when you think you know the answer, when you don't even know all the

information. And I think that's what Job did. And when that affects your relationship with God, that's a big deal. When you start drawing all the conclusions without all the information, and then it begins to affect your relationship with God, that's something quite serious. And that's where Job's life really was. Not that he ever sinned, as it clearly says.

But it is possible as a believer to feel as though you're kept in the dark. And I don't mean kept in the dark spiritually. I mean kept in the dark by way of understanding that God, you know, doesn't let on to everything. And it's very difficult that I think we can all look back over our life, or even our present life, and go, do you know what, I understand from reading your word that you know what you're doing, but I'm having a hard time figuring it out. And sometimes we just have to come to the conclusion that it's not for us to figure out. And we can spend all this time and energy trying to figure out what we cannot ever know.

[7 : 08] So I don't mean spiritual darkness, I just mean understanding that God can keep us in the dark. And God then calls us to follow him, and he expects us to follow him, even when he keeps us in the dark. It's called walking by faith.

Walking by faith is a lot harder than walking by sight, because walking by sight is what unbelievers do. They can't help but walk by sight, because that's all that they've got. But believers walk by faith, or they ought to walk by faith. Now when we read God's word, we know that God is love. He describes himself that way. We know that God is good. We also know that God is infinite. He's infinitely clever. He's infinite in his wisdom. He is infinite in his understanding. In other words, he's super in the lot. We cannot even get close to him. And so you can understand, I guess, that it's impossible really for us to figure out what God is up to all the time when God is so far beyond us. But at the same time, we have to know, according to Scripture, that God works everything out according to his good purpose. He works all things together for the good. The trouble is, however, is that our version of what is good, or how it ought to be worked out, is often different from God's way of doing it. And I struggle as I read Scripture, you know, why on earth did God choose to do it that way and not this way. And, you know, we all have those moments. But another way of putting all of this is this. It's simply saying that our limitations are not God's limitations. Okay? Our limitations are not God's limitations. So for the unbeliever, if you imagine an unbeliever trapped in a dungeon, chained to the wall, he is limited in a way that the prison guard isn't. Now it doesn't follow that just because the prisoner who's chained to the wall can't get up and touch the prison guard on his nose. It doesn't mean, however, that the prison guard can't walk in and touch the prisoner on his nose. In other words, the limitations of the prisoner is not the limitation of the prison guard. We understand the distinction. And so in a world where people are trapped in sin and in bondage and they cannot reach out for God. No one seeks for God. No, not one. Okay? The Bible is really quite clear, at least in two New Testament passages, that there is only one true seeker. And it's God. And do you know what?

That is much more encouraging to think that God is out there seeking than it is to worry about whether or not my son or my brother or whoever is seeking. Because the Bible tells me that they don't seek for God. They seek for the things of God, which a lot of believers can get confused. It looks as though they're seeking for God. And in the moments where they are truly seeking for God, it is because God has first sought them. And there begins, those motions begin to start moving. Those cogs begin. But their limitations are not God's. So God steps in and he does at the times that he does and in the ways that he does. So what we're going to be exploring this evening, what we're going to be considering, I'm going to give you the theological word for it, is the incomprehensibility of God.

That's what they call it. Okay? I think they should just call it, my limitations are not God's limitations. I think it's far simpler. Okay? I think we understand what that means. But when you say something is incomprehensible, we know what that means. It means that we can't understand it.

[11 : 08] So how can I explain the incomprehensibility of God if it's incomprehensible? You see my problem. And what it actually means is that my limitations are not God's limitations. Here in the book of Job, Job has raised a lot of questions. The trouble is, is that his friends seem to have had all the answers.

The trouble is, is that their answers are not correct. And Job has actually listened to them on and off. But the answers that they come up with are not actually the right answers. Job then begins to question God. And God here in chapter 38 kind of frames up to Job. And I think it's enough to frighten any living being. In verse one, he basically says to Job, who is it that darkens counsel by

words without knowledge? In other words, you're coming to me, Job, with questions as if you know. The trouble is, is that you're, you're messing up the issue even more by thinking that you know when you don't know. And then God does something I think really quite strange. I certainly wouldn't like to have been in Job's position. Verse three, dress for action like a man. In other words, here we have God out of the world when saying to Job, come on then. Are you ready? If you're, if you're bold enough to ask me, come on, dress for action like a man. And then the next verse is, I will question you or the part B, I will question you and you will make it known to me. In other words, God is turning the tables on Job.

Job at one point thinks that he is bold enough to be able to come before God. And God says, well, I'm not going anywhere. I'm not going to back down. If, if you're man enough, go for it.

Dress for action like a man and I'll begin to question you. And let's see if you have the answers. I mean, that's, that's quite a frightening position to be in. And there's probably a couple of times I think we can point to ourselves and say, yeah, I've been there. And I've been there where I felt the reality of my insufficiency before God. Where God, I, you know, I was calling God's bluff, but actually he called mine. And here I am now having to face God, even though I started it.

[13:57] It reminds me of the story that Jesus told in the New Testament, in the Gospels rather, where he says, well, what king going out to encounter another king in war will not sit down first and deliberate whether or not he with 10,000 has enough to meet who comes against him with 20,000. In other words, what Job has done is he is, he's basically gone to pick a fight with God and not actually considered that he is completely in a different weight category.

That God's not even in his league. Now God is so incredibly gracious, but he's giving Job a taste of his own medicine with the questions that he faces with. On another level, what this raises is something quite serious. And that is, is it the case that people who are so bold to question God down here on earth, will they continue to be so bold when they meet God face to face? I don't think so.

I really don't think so. I think the Bible is quite clear that those people who say, when I get to heaven, I've got a few questions to ask God, you're not even going to speak. The scripture says that when that day comes, that every knee will bow and every tongue that believes will confess, but every mouth will be shut. I don't think that we are ever to think that we are any match for God. So we begin to see in quite a serious way that our limitations are not God's limitations. And that the moment we try and go up against God, we feel the sense of our own limitations. This is the incomprehensibility of God.

In other words, that there are some things that we can know, but we cannot know everything. So when we speak of the incomprehensibility of God, we're not saying that we can't know anything about God. And we can't, we're not saying that we can't know anything about what God has revealed.

What we're saying is that we cannot know everything. And the reason why that is so important is because we are a people who constantly draw conclusions.

[16:14] Well, God, God can't love me if he allows this to happen. God can't, right? And we're drawing conclusions left, right, and center. But what we need to consider is this incomprehensibility of God. That while there are some things we can know, we cannot know everything. And God is having to point out to Job quite clearly and quite sufficiently. You don't know everything, Job.

You can't even answer your own question, Job. You have drawn conclusions about what I'm like and why this is happening, and you're not even close to the answer. So my limitations are not God's limitations. Here's another way of explaining it. Have you ever gone to see a friend or a brother or a sister that lives, you know, or a mother or whoever that lives, you know, in a different country or even in the same country, and you have to pack a travel bag or you have to pack a suitcase or you have to pack the car because you're going on holiday and or the children are having to pack something.

And you're having to say at some point, that's not going to fit. It doesn't matter how much you sit on it. It doesn't matter how much you get me to sit on it. You're not going to be able to do up the zip. In other words, you begin to understand that you want to take this amount to there in this vehicle or in this suitcase. But however, the vehicle or the suitcase has a limited amount of space. And because it has a limited amount of space, you can't get an infinite amount of stuff into it. You then for have to choose what goes into it. So what goes in and what stays out. And so when it comes to knowing God, and when it comes to understanding God is infinite in his wisdom, that he is infinite in his

understanding. And you begin to understand that the world is not infinite. That when God created the world, he created, you know, so much that could be put into it.

You can't put more into the world than what the world can contain. And you can't get more into your mind and head and heart than what it can contain. So God has to make a choice.

That God who is infinite in wisdom cannot put all that knowledge into you because you don't have enough space in your life to contain it. So God has to choose what he fills your life with, what he tells you, from what he doesn't. Simply because you can't put an infinite amount into a finite space. You can't put an infinite amount of stuff into a limited amount of space.

[19 : 11] So my limitations are not God's limitations. God is not trying, however, to sit on you as if you're the suitcase he's trying to squeeze everything into. It'll go. It'll go. God knows that you can't handle everything. So God withholds certain truths. God withholds certain knowledge. God withholds a whole lot of stuff that our minds and hearts just could not handle.

Now the next thing to know is this, that everything that God therefore does tell us is really, really important. That the stuff that God does choose to, that he does choose to fill our hearts and minds with is really important. And it's important for this reason, that we have to know enough about God to not get him wrong.

Now just think about that for a moment. I'm going to pause here as long as I can just to get you to think about that. If God is infinite and we can't get the infinite amount of truth about God into our finite mind, how are we ever really to comprehend God fully? The answer is we can't.

But God does have to tell us enough about him so that we don't get him wrong. So that we don't worship the God of our imagination. Remember, God's commandments begin with you are not to worship any other God but me. You're not to worship and turn to idols. And an idol is even thinking about God wrongly. So we must be very clear on who God is. And so God tells us who he is. And so what he chooses to tell us is enough to get him right, to not get him wrong, so that we don't have to imagine what God is like. The trouble is, if we began to imagine what God is like, what would happen? We would all imagine a God after our own image. We would all imagine a God to be a certain way that suits the way we want God to be. So God has to make it clear, as Jesus says in John 4, that God has come so that men and women, boys and girls, would worship him in spirit and in truth. That God sent Jesus for that reason. That you would worship him in spirit and in truth so that you don't get him wrong.

So that you really know who God is. Why? Because God will not allow us to worship idols. Especially if the idol is imagining what he is like rather than knowing what he is really like.

[22 : 16] So our limitations are not God's limitations, but God deals with our limitations by telling us exactly who he is and what he is like. Now some of us would put our hand up right now and admit that I have a hard job understanding everything that the Bible teaches.

Yet that doesn't seem to stop us from asking questions that are too great for us. You ought to be giving, you ought to be having the impression right at this moment that God is far superior to you. Far superior to any of us here. But at the same time, incredibly loving, incredible with his wisdom towards us in the fact that he gave us his son.

Now there's one other thing. When it speaks in Deuteronomy 29, 29, that the secret things belong unto the Lord our God and the things that are revealed belong unto us. Do we know why?

Do we know why God chooses to tell us some things and not tell us other things? Because in Deuteronomy 29, 29, it's not so much about you can't know it, you couldn't handle it. In other words, I can't get it in.

God is actively deciding, I'm going to tell you this, but I'm not going to tell you this. I'm going to tell you these things, but I'm not going to tell you these things. Why not? Well, the verse follows says this, that he tells us the things that he does, that we may do all the words of his law.

[23 : 59] So again, God is more concerned about one thing in particular, and that is that we obey him. And it takes us back to Jesus that if we can't be faithful in the small things, we can't be faithful in the big things. So what God is saying is effectively that all the things that I've revealed is enough to prove whether or not you'll be obedient to me.

You don't need to know everything to be obedient. He who is faithful in a small will be faithful in a lot. The trouble is, however, is that some people want to put God in the dock, and they are the judge. And they, like Job, begin to question God. But God, as we see with Jesus, who is God, the Son, always answers a question with another question.

Because the people questioning him are not fit to do so. Because their questions are obviously conclusions that they have drawn way ahead of time. When they think that they know everything, when in fact, they hardly know much at all. So what does all this mean as we draw it to a conclusion?

Well, let me give you a little story. Karl Barth was a Swiss theologian. He's dead now. He wrote over six million words on theology. I have his complete collection in book form in the study.

It was not study. It's a dining room stroke study, but in there, which I've read twice. Twice. No, I was only joking. I've not read twice at all. I've read perhaps one or two books fully.

[25 : 58] But there's a full set of volumes. He then went to a college where he taught quite a lot. But in this one college in America, he was a question and answer time. And one of the students decided to ask him a question. He says, well, what is the most profound thing that you have ever learned about God?

What is a, you know, after studying so much, after learning so much, after writing over six million words in theology, what is the most profoundest thing that you have ever learned?

And he didn't say anything at first. And he paused and he thought, and then he opened his mouth and said this, Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so. And the class began to laugh because they thought he was joking. But you try and explain why God loves you, other than for the reason that the Bible tells you so.

You can explain how he loves you. You can explain that he gave you Jesus. You can explain that it was his choice.

But why? Why? Simple, isn't it? And so these people who stick to these simple truths are sticking to truths that are more complicated than you can ever imagine. And yet the thing that pleases God the most is that these believers believe it. Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so. God reveals the things that he reveals in order that we believe them, in order that we trust him, in order that we believe what he has said.

[27 : 58] He is not looking for us to understand everything. He has given us a finite mind, therefore we cannot understand everything. He is, however, looking to us to believe everything that he has said.

So as we draw this to conclusion, the conclusion is about conclusions. Carl Barrett concluded that Jesus loves him, this he knows, for the Bible tells him so. In other words, he drew the conclusion that God loves him because the Bible told him so. That's the conclusion that he came to. And it was the right conclusion to come to. The trouble is, Job's friends all wanted to answer Job. They also drew conclusions, but their conclusions they drew ahead of time. They drew conclusions as if they knew everything, but they actually knew nothing. And so God, in chapter 42, verse 2, says this, shall a fault finder contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer it.

In other words, when God actually puts us on the spot, we can't even answer our own question.

Then God says in verse 8, will you ever put me in the wrong? Will you condemn me that you may be right? In other words, what is being said here is that God is putting a person on the spot, saying, you are simply saying these things about me, that what I have said in my word is not enough for you, simply because you want to be in the right, and you want to put me in the wrong?

Now that's quite a prideful thing to be, isn't it? Where you'd rather be right before God than humble.

Where you'd rather be right in your pride before God than be corrected.

Where you'd rather God change his mind and confess that he is wrong, rather than admit that you are. And that's the place that Job gets to.

[30 : 21] That's the very thing that God brings before Job. Job, you don't know everything. And there are secret things that you could never know.

So stop drawing conclusions. Stop drawing conclusions based on the fact as if you thought you knew everything. Barth said, Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.

Because the Bible told him so. Okay? Because the Bible told him so. As I said at the beginning, it's possible to be a believer and to feel that God is keeping you in the dark.

Well, it's not so much that God is keeping you in the dark as much as it is that you can't know everything. And there are secret things that God won't tell you anyway. So there are two things that we go up against as we live the Christian life.

One, my limitations are not God's limitations. I can't know everything that God knows. And two, even if I could, God has secret things that he's not going to tell me anyway. So I'm forced, rightly so, to depend on God who does.

[31 : 43] Job then comes to clarity in chapter 42 and he confesses before God, Yes, I don't understand everything. I know that you can do all things and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge? Therefore, I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

That's the conclusion that Job comes to. In other words, the only clarity that he comes to, the understanding that he has, is an understanding that he doesn't know everything. And he could never know everything.

The point then is fairly simple. That we have a Bible and there is enough in it for us to know not to get God wrong. God has told us enough not to get God wrong.

But he has not told us everything. And therefore, we can't draw any conclusions ahead of time. At least we can't draw conclusions about that which God has not revealed.

[32 : 56] Amen.