

Purpose in Pain

Job 1:6-22

Intro: What is the chief end of man? "The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." It's easy to say isn't it? Not only that, it's easy to affirm as our goal in life. It's easy to say that this is what I want – I want to glorify God. I want to enjoy Him – in this life and forever. And praise God, by the work of the Holy Spirit within us, we really do want these things! But we seldom consider the cost of that confession.

The book of Job teaches one of the most profound and most difficult doctrines in all of Scripture. It teaches us that the glory of God is more important than our comfort – and to say "yes" to the glory of God as the mission of your life is to invite suffering into your life. "The glory of God is more important than your comfort."

"O Love That Will Not Let Me Go".

John Eaves, "Life is not about us. Life is about Jesus and our witness for him in this world."

One of the primary ways we witness for Jesus is in our suffering and our dying.

I. The Confrontation (6-12)

One of the incredible blessings of the book of Job is that we are allowed to see what we would normally never be able to see. We are invited into the heavenly council room – to listen in on a conversation between God and the Satan.

A. The Council –

1. *"the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord."* These are angelic beings, servants of the Most High God, who do His will. (The angel Gabriel and Michael).

- **Psalm 82:1** God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment:
- **Psalm 89:6-7** Who among the heavenly beings is like the LORD, a God greatly to be feared in the council of the holy ones, and awesome above all who are around him?
- Somewhat like the Cabinet of the President

2. *"the Satan also came among them."*

- His name – The Satan, the Adversary, the Accuser. The article “the” emphasizes that this not just his name, it is his primary role.
- His role – to make accusations against God and his people.
Unwittingly, to serve God’s purposes. God is not the author of evil, but he has a role for the Devil, a task for the Devil to do.
- His access - Satan is a fallen angel – but here we see that he was still allowed access into the presence of God.

B. The Challenge – Here we come to the issue of the book and so we must take our time to make sure we understand it.

:7 “The LORD said to Satan, “From where have you come?” Satan answered the LORD and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.” And the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?”

Notice who begins the conversation. God does. God is the primary agent in this chapter – not the Satan. In some sense we could say that Job would have never suffered as he did if God had not begun this conversation with the Devil. If God would have been silent, Job would not have lost everything.

So why does God speak? Because He is after something great and necessary and infinitely good. He is seeking to magnify His glory. God is challenging the Devil – not vice versa. The Devil rebelled against God and believes God to be unworthy of worship and obedience and praise. His first speech in this world, in the Garden of Eden, was a speech suggesting to Eve that God was not worthy of worship and obedience. And he goes to and fro throughout the earth looking to implant that lie in the hearts of men. He lives to prove that God is not infinitely glorious.

But there was a man who didn’t believe it. There was a great and good man in the land of Uz who was blameless and upright because he feared God – he loved and revered and delighted in God. In a world full of people deceived by the Devil’s lie’s- there was a man whose faith and obedience and love shone like a light in the midst of a dark and deceived world. By calling the Devil’s attention to Job – the Lord is taunting him. “Have you considered my servant Job??” Of course he has – he has considered Job countless times. He hates Job. He hates the testimony of his life. He hates his worship and reverence for God.

C. The Devil's Response –

⁹ "Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason?

¹⁰Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face."

What is the Devil saying? He's saying – Of course Job loves you. Why wouldn't he? You give him a great life. You put a hedge around him and bless him. He's rich. He has a beautiful wife, 10 great kids, a sterling reputation, incredible wealth. Who wouldn't worship a God who blesses him like that?

The Devil's challenge can be summarized in a simple question. Why is Job pious? Why does Job worship God? Is it due to conviction or convenience? Is it because He is convinced that God and God alone is really worthy of his worship and obedience and praise – or is it because God gives really nice gifts?

Satan's charge is that Job doesn't worship God because He thinks God is glorious – but because it pays off really well. He's discovered that piety returns great dividends. He doesn't love actually love God – he loves the good life and only worships God because God gives it to him. "But stretch out your hand to touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face."

Do you see how this challenge goes to the foundations of meaning? This is the ultimate question of all things – is the Living God truly glorious – and is His glory KNOWN on the earth which He has made?

What an insult to God if His creation, even his children, had no real conviction concerning His worth!

One of the most painful and disgracing things a child can do is to renounce their parents – and we are sinful. How much more disgraceful and awful if God should find that this world he has made and the children he loves renounce Him?

This is not a casual wager between the Devil and the Lord. It is the question of the universe. Is God worthy of worship in His own being, for His own glory? And is His glory known and cherished on earth?

Ash points out that the Devil, for all his malignant motives, is doing something necessary to the glory of God. In some deep way it is necessary for it to be

publicly seen by the whole universe that God, in His Being, is worthy of the worship of a man.

How can the Devil's charge be put to the test?

Ash "How can we tell whether Job is pious because he believes God is worthy of his loving worship or whether he is pious because he believes that piety will result in blessings? ..We must find out, says the Devil. And the only way to find out is to take away Job's prosperity." (44)

On the face of it – it seems like the Devil has put God in a corner. That would be an easy way to read this. The Devil put God in a corner by issuing this challenge and God had no choice but to respond in order to protect his honor. He had to defend and prove His glory – and poor Job just got destroyed in the process. And it would be easy to read our sufferings in the same light. We are just hapless victims in this conflict between the Devil and the Lord.

But that is entirely missing the truth of this text. The Devil hasn't cornered the Lord. God has cornered the Devil. Why does God say "Have you considered my servant Job??" Because Job is **HIS** servant – His chosen one, a man who stands in the midst of a godless world bearing testimony to the glory and goodness of the Living God! God knows what Job's response will be. Job is a weapon in the hands of God to defeat the Devil, to expose his lies. Through Job, God will magnify the glory of His worth!

Job is not collateral damage in a heavenly wager – he is exhibit A. And so are you!
Ephesians 3:10-11

¹⁰His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, ¹¹according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And God, who knows and controls all things and works all things for His glory – says to Satan "Behold all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand." So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord."

II. The Test (13-19)

"Now there was a day" – a day just like today. Maybe a day just like September 11, 2001 – a beautiful, sun-filled, fall morning in New York city. A good day. Job's children were having one of their feasts. And then Job lost everything.

- He lost his 500 yoke of oxen and his 500 female donkeys and the servants who attended them – all of them, save one.
- He lost all his 7,000 sheep in a lightning storm, and all the servants who watched them – save one.
- He lost his 3,000 camels and the servants.

And then, the thing he most feared.

18-19 “While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, “Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house, and behold, a great wind came across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”

He lost everything of value in his life – in a single moment this great man, the greatest man of the east, was bankrupt and childless. A picture of utter and complete loss.

There are two great things before us now:

- The devastating reality of this man’s grief and pain and loss.
- The essential question concerning the glory of God. Will Job denounce God to his face – as the Devil had charged he would do? Does God have true worshipers on earth – or only consumers who love His gifts? **What will Job do?** He worships.

III. The Result/Verdict (20-22)

²⁰ Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. ²¹ 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.”

- He acknowledges his own utter dependence – “naked I came and naked I shall return”. Every possession was an unmerited gift from the Lord.
- That means that the Lord has the **right** to give – and the right to take away. Our finances, our children, our health – all belong to Him.
- Blessed be the name of the Lord – in the giving and the taking, the name of the Lord is worthy to be praised. Job’s desire – may others bless the name of the Lord.

Job 1:22 “In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.”

- The Devil has been proven a liar.
- Job is proven to be a true worshiper; his chief desire is the glory of God

- God is glorified in the worship and faith of His servant.

There is nothing in this world that is more glorifying to God than faith in trials. Nothing reveals the glory of God more. Nothing expresses what we think about God more clearly than when we worship Him through tears and trust Him through the pain. The trials are necessary because the magnifying of Gods' glory is necessary. God's glory is worth more than our comfort.

1 Peter 1:6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Our faith is real in the good times, but it redounds to the glory of God, in a unique and necessary way, in the times of loss. The light of Gods' glory is revealed most dramatically when we praise him in the context of sorrow and loss.

Job's response is a stunning, magnificent triumph of faith for the glory of God! But it isn't easy.

Rick Thomas, *"Suffering Well"*. His wife left him, taking his two young children with her. "It took me two years to process this chapter. Job's response to tragedy seemed to be an unscalable mountain.....This is not how I responded. I cried and wailed, longing for God to return the things I had lost – my wife and two small children."

What matters most in the world? Our comfort? Our possessions? Our children? Our life? Is this what life is really about? Or is there something more, something greater, more satisfying, more essential and pleasing? Job testifies in the midst and the moment of his overwhelming loss that there is something more to life than God's gifts – there is God.

And in this, Job point us to the glory of Christ. Though Job lost much – only one man ever lost what Jesus lost. Jesus came to be the greater Job – he came to suffer the absolute loss of infinite riches to show the world and the universe that God is worthy *in His being* of the worship of man. Why did Jesus suffer and die? "Father the hour has come – glorify your name."

Are we willing to trust the God who loved us and gave his life for us? Are we willing to be a part of showing to the world the greatness and glory of God – particularly as the Lord calls us to suffer? Is God worth our worship – even in the pain?