

A Growing Faith

Job 23

Intro: One of the great joys of springtime is the joy of watching things grow. I decided to try a little gardening this spring, so I bought a starter tray and planted some seeds. They seemed very, very small, and very dead. But in two days, the cucumbers started to appear, and then the lettuce, and a few days later the tomatoes. It was just amazing to watch the green shoots unfurl from the soil and then leaves appear and the tiny plants growing day by day. It's really quite miraculous!

The growth of living faith in the soul of a man is equally awe-inspiring and miraculous. We so often assume faith just happens. That's it quite normal. But nothing in all this world is more super-natural than the growth of true and living faith in hearts of those who were once utterly dead in sin. It is nothing less than the miraculous work of God.

As we have been studying the book of Job, we have been watching the miracle of a growing faith. You maybe haven't noticed; the growth has been slow – as it is for most of us - but there are clear evidences that Job's faith is being purified and strengthened.

For instance, it seems pretty clear that Job once held to "the system" – the idea that moral world runs along simple lines of retributive justice. God blesses good people and punishes bad people. That's what his friends believed – and Job apparently had once held to the same conviction. But Job's suffering, as an innocent man, has destroyed his faith in 'the system'. His faith is being purified.

We've also seen Job slowly grow in a conviction that things are going to be made right because he has a growing sense that he has a Helper on high.

- In chapter 9, it's just a wish, "Oh that there were an Arbiter", a Mediator, someone who would be able to reconcile him to God.
- In chapter 16 he comes to a conviction there IS such a one: "Even now, my Witness in heaven and he who testifies for me is on high." (16:19)
- In chapter 19 even more light breaks through and Job exalts "I know that my Redeemer lives – and in my flesh I shall see God."

Job's trials have not destroyed his faith in God. The vast majority of his speeches are addressed to God. He hasn't lost his faith – his faith is the foundation for his laments. He can't help but turn to God and cry to God and cast himself upon God. The problem is – he can't find God! And that's where we begin in our text this morning.

I. A Hidden God

³ Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat!

⁴ I would lay my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments.

Job's deepest desire is to meet with God. Specifically, he yearns to "come even to his seat". In other words, Job wants to come before the judgment throne of God. And he is convinced that the Lord would receive him, hear his case, and acquit him!

⁵ I would know what he would answer me
and understand what he would say to me.

⁶ Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power?
No; he would pay attention to me.

⁷ There an upright man could argue with him,
and I would be acquitted forever by my judge.

Job is convinced that God is just and, being just, God will respond to Job's innocence with a verdict of "righteous".

Imagine that someone went to your boss and falsely charged that you were stealing money from the company. You would want to go talk to the boss! You would want to go and prove your innocence and make sure that there is nothing unresolved between you and your boss.

That's what Job wants more than anything!

Ash: If we ask Job what is the longing of his heart, he will answer that deeper than the desire for his riches to be restored or his children to be given back to him is the heart-yearning to stand before God righteous."

He wants to stand before God and be declared righteous in his sight! He wants to be acquitted, declared innocent, and reconciled to his God.

Isn't this your desire? Isn't this what you want, truly more than anything? To have God, the Living God, declare you to be righteous and thus fit for eternal glory in His presence. THAT is life and health and peace. And it's what Job wants more than anything. He is desperate to be reconciled to God. But he can't find Him.

⁸ "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there,
and backward, but I do not perceive him;

⁹ on the left hand when he is working, I do not behold him;
he turns to the right hand, but I do not see him.

Job is like a little child lost in a department store desperately looking for their mother. No matter which way he turns, he can't find his God. He can't "perceive" him. God's ways don't make sense to him. He's lost when it comes to God's purposes in his life.

Remember, Job knows nothing about chapter 1 and 2. He has no idea that his suffering is part of Gods' great plan to glorify His name and defeat the Devil. All he knows is that his life has been devastated by God – and it makes no sense.

But in a world full of unanswered questions, Job discovers a glorious conviction.

¹⁰ But he knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold.

II. A Saving God

Notice that Job is convinced that when this trial is over – he will come forth as gold. In other words, when it's all said and done, Job shall be justified, his faith will be found genuine, and he will be reconciled to God.

On what is that confidence founded? It's founded on the things he is coming to understand and believe about God in a new way.

A. *The Omniscience of God*

"He knows the way that I take."

Isn't this wonderful! In a in a sea of circumstances he doesn't understand and a world full of things he doesn't know, he finds this glorious truth - God **does** know. "**He knows the way that I take.**" Though he can't see God - God sees him. Though he can't discern God's ways, God knows Job's ways.

THAT can bring comfort and peace. Think of your average 10-year-old sitting in the back seat on a trip to California. Imagine you came to him somewhere in the middle of Iowa and asked him some questions: What road are you on? "I don't know". Well how long will it take to get to California? I don't know. Where will you eat supper tonight? Where will you sleep tonight? I don't know. His world is filled with things he doesn't know, important things like where he will eat and sleep. And yet he seems completely unconcerned about this. He's listening to his music or reading a book or watching a video as though he has no care in the world. Why isn't he anxious about all these things he doesn't know?? Because he believes that his parents know! And that's enough.

Our current context is filled with things we don't know. There are so many things we don't know about the disease itself. And we don't know how long this pandemic will last. We don't know what the economic impact of the shut-down will be. We don't know what the next year or two might hold. It most likely will hold some sorrow and loss. But we don't know. And Gods' people can experience great anxiety and stress trying to

figure it out. But think of the comfort we might feel if we actually trusted in God. My Father loves me – and He knows the way.

Spurgeon, “It is a great comfort that when we cannot see the Lord, He sees us, and perceives the way that we take. Our case may be quite beyond our own comprehension, but it is all plain to Him who seeth the end from the beginning.”

B. The Justice of God

¹⁰ But he knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold.

¹¹ My foot has held fast to his steps;

I have kept his way and have not turned aside.

¹² I have not departed from the commandment of his lips;

I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my portion of food.

We noted this last week, but just to point out again, Job’s confidence in his ultimate victory is rooted in two convictions: the justice of God and the righteousness of his life. These two things demand a verdict of innocence and the blessing of a restored relationship with God.

This is the glory of the gospel! In Christ, we have been given the free gift of righteousness by faith alone and thus trust that our salvation is as certain as God is just! The justice of God is a terror for those who are not in Christ. But if you have fled to Christ for refuge, the justice of God is your great comfort. Jesus died for you – and God will certainly save you.

C. The Unchanging, Sovereign Purposes of God.

¹³ But he is unchangeable, and who can turn him back?

What he desires, that he does.

¹⁴ For he will complete what he appoints for me,
and many such things are in his mind.

“He is unchangeable.” The Hebrew literally reads “God is one”. The idea seems to be that God is not double-minded. God has one great purpose for this world. There is one great purpose in God’s mind. Nothing happens by accident or chance. All things are ordered by the One great purpose of God.

Not only does God **have** a great purpose – but he accomplishes it!

13 “who can turn him back? What he desires, that he does.

God does everything He wants to do. He is never frustrated in his purposes. Ever!

Isaiah 14:27 For the LORD of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it?

His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?

Who is greater than God? Who can make him turn away from what he has decreed?

Now that doesn't immediately comfort Job!

¹⁵ Therefore I am terrified at his presence; when I consider, I am in dread of him.

¹⁶ God has made my heart faint; the Almighty has terrified me;

Have you ever been frightened by the idea that God is in total control of your life? Think of it - God has determined precisely every joy, every trial, every heartache, every tear. That's not immediately comforting. What if God has ordained devastatingly hard and heartbreaking things for me? What if he has ordained that my worst fears come true?

This is where God's revelation to us as NT Christians is so precious! You see Job's fear in Gods' sovereignty was rooted in his current feeling that he was under Gods' judgment. This is his deepest grief. This is why he longs for a Mediator. This is why his heart is breaking as he seeks for God. "Where is God? Where can I find Him?"

The gospel answer is utterly unexpected and astounding. Where do we find God? On a cross dying for us. The cross of Jesus Christ is God's answer to all those who ask, "Where is God?" Consequently, all the sovereign ways of God in the details of our lives must be read through the lens of infinite love and grace displayed on the cross.

This is so critical. This is the difference between a Christian conception of God's sovereignty and Muslim one. The sovereignty we profess is a sovereignty bound by love and sealed in blood. The glory and comfort of Gods' immutable Sovereign purpose is that it is an immutable, unchangeable purpose to save us and to do us eternal good. The rock of assurance available to every believer is the rock of Gods' sovereign, saving blood-bought purpose for us. Listen to the Apostle Paul, for instance, in **1 Thessalonians 5:9**,

1 Thessalonians 5:9 "For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him."

2 Thessalonians 2:14 "To this He called you through our gospel, *so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

God eternal desire is that you should obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ - and "What He desires, that he does." God purposed this for you from eternity past – and therefore you shall have it for eternity to come – for God does not change! Nothing can separate us from the loving purpose of God – for He is God and "who can turn him back"? ALL authority and power belong to Jesus – and who can stay His sovereign hand? This is our unshakeable confidence. Jesus has purposed to save us to the uttermost, to accomplish every single thing necessary for our justification, our sanctification and our glorification. He has purposed to bring you and me into His glorious presence without spot and with great joy. And so it will be. He will complete what he has appointed for you!!

This is why a sinning, struggling believer can confidently say, with Job, "When I am tried – I shall come forth as gold." How do we know?

- Because we have been given, as a free gift the righteousness of Christ
- Because it is God's purpose!! He will not abandon or forsake the works of his hands. The work that he has begun he will carry to completion.

1 Thessalonians 5:23–24 Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

All the Sovereign power of Jesus is engaged with infinite skill and wisdom for your eternal glory and good. Let's ask the Lord use these trials to grow our faith in His omniscience, just and sovereign love. Jesus is leading us – and He will lead us all the way.

All the way my Savior leads me, what have I to ask besides?
 Can I doubt His tender mercy, who through life has been my guide?
 Heavenly peace, divinest comfort, here by faith in him to dwell.
 For I know, whatever befalls me, Jesus doeth all things well.

In a world of things we don't know – this we can know. Jesus doeth all things well.
 Amen?