

Keynotes from Tim Gamston's am Sermon on 10/7/2022

Series: "Seeing God through suffering"

Part 13: "Suffering will end" Text: Job 42 verses 10-17

Scripture references from the ESV

Job 42:10-17 And the LORD restored the fortunes of Job, when he had prayed for his friends. And the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. ¹¹ Then came to him all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before, and ate bread with him in his house. And they showed him sympathy and comforted him for all the evil^[b] that the LORD had brought upon him. And each of them gave him a piece of money^[c] and a ring of gold.¹² And the LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning. And he had 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 yoke of oxen, and 1,000 female donkeys.¹³ He had also seven sons and three daughters. ¹⁴ And he called the name of the first daughter Jemimah, and the name of the second Keziah, and the name of the third Keren-happuch. ¹⁵ And in all the land there were no women so beautiful as Job's daughters. And their father gave them an inheritance among their brothers. ¹⁶ And after this Job lived 140 years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, four generations. ¹⁷ And Job died, an old man, and full of days.

James 5:11 Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and **you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.**

- Do you really believe that God is compassionate and merciful?
- Do you really believe that God feels for us in our suffering, pain and doubts and that he reaches down to help even though we don't deserve it?

It is an important question because if we don't believe that God is compassionate and merciful then we won't worship him or love and trust him when suffering comes upon us. No one loves or trusts a tyrant. If you truly believe that God is compassionate and merciful, then your life will be radically different to the lives of those around you.

James (5:11 above) tells us that we are meant to see the compassion and mercy of God as we look at the life of Job. Job has shown us what steadfastness looks like. Even though God took him through terrible suffering, Job did not curse God or give up on him. Despite his pain and confusion, above all else Job wanted God. Not once did he cry out for the restoration of his family, his wealth or his health. Rather, his whole heart longed for God and

he cries out for God to come to him.

- The secret of that kind of steadfastness is not a dead religion or system, but a relationship with the living God.

We need to look at God's purpose in suffering, remembering that God never acts randomly. Everything that God does is for a purpose, but we might find what James says a little confusing (5:11 above).

God's purpose in Job's suffering is to put the compassion and mercy of God on display.

By the time we come to the end of the book of Job, we will have come to see that God is compassionate and merciful. This is probably not what we would expect! After all, Job, a blameless man, has been afflicted with evil.

- Job has suffered, having had evil done to him. Satan accused him before God, and God permitted Satan to attack him. His children were killed, all his wealth was taken from him and his friends turned on him, accusing him of sins he hadn't committed. Yet Job sees God's hand in this.
- Job has sinned, experiencing evil in his own heart. He found himself wrongly accusing God of not caring and of acting unjustly.

Despite this, Job still longed for God, and did not curse him. It is easy to see that Job is an example of steadfastness.

However, it is much harder to see how all the suffering with which he was afflicted shows God's compassion and mercy.

We will only have hope that we too can be steadfast if we can see and understand that God is compassionate and merciful in our suffering and sin, not just when he gives us good things.

As we reach the end of this book, we can see God's compassion and mercy displayed in five ways.

1. God meets with us. The one thing Job longed for was to meet with God, even when he was wrongly accusing him. (23:3 see p4) Job didn't find God. Rather, God found him. Of course, God was there all the time, but he made his presence known to Job by his word spoken to him.

God spoke into Job's suffering and sin to reveal himself in a way that Job would not have seen if he had not been taken by God into such deep darkness. (Chs 38-41 please read in your Bible).

Job's affliction exposed a wrong understanding of God in his heart. As Job tried to justify himself before his friends, he accused God of acting wrongly in the world. God did not turn away in a huff or turn on Job defensively as we might do. Instead, God moved towards Job and met Job where he was. That is not what Job deserved but

it is the compassion and mercy of God.

2000 years ago, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God incarnate, entered our world. He met people in their suffering and sin. In the process, he revealed God to be a compassionate and merciful God who offers hope to those who suffer and to sinners. Through this, we see that in all our suffering and sin, God is present. At times we may feel that he has abandoned us, or that we have sinned so badly that he won't want us, but

God is always present in our sin and suffering.

He comes by his Spirit with a message of love from the Bible that enables us to see how he meets us in our need. Job needed to see that God does care and is just and God revealed that to him through a series of questions. Whatever your need, whether your affliction is due to suffering that is coming at you or from sin that is rising in your heart, Christ is the answer. As we cry out to him with longing hearts, he will reveal himself to us as the one who meets our need.

2. God humbles us. Job's lamentation turned into accusation. It was the kind of accusation that presumed to know better than God how to run the universe and his life. It exposed a heart of pride. When God spoke to Job and showed him the complexity of the universe, Job saw the infinite power and wisdom of God

- to govern the universe and to care for all he has made
- to justly deal with evil people, death and Satan

As God showed him all this, so Job was humbled. (40:3-5, 42:1-6 see p4). Job 'saw' God's majesty and was humbled. We too need to be humbled, as we see how we have spoken wrongly about God and failed to comprehend his majesty. It is only as we are humbled that we are able to come to a place of true worship as Job did.

It is a paradox that we show our dependence on God by asking his help for our exam results or a new job, but when we get what we ask for, it often leads to pride and we become self-dependent, so we stop seeing the awesome power of God to meet our needs.

The tragic result of that is, at best, a loss of joy in God, and, at its worst, it is a sign that we are not truly born again. Thus, the most deeply compassionate and merciful thing God can do is to humble us and

- To use suffering to show us our weakness and dependence on him
- To bring us so low in our estimation of who we are that we come to lean on him completely

If God had not humbled Job, he would have been proud and under the just anger of God as his friends were.

- 3. God justifies us.** Job continually protested his blamelessness, while his friends accused him of sin. Finally, the only judge who matters declares his verdict. Job **IS** blameless (**42:7** see p4). The friends were wrong. Job is accepted by God, declared to be one of his own people and to be in the right. That is justification and **it is an act of compassion and mercy by God.**

Like all of us, Job had sinned against God so how could God declare Job was in the right, when he clearly wasn't?

Job had eyes of faith to see the Lord Jesus Christ, though he was yet to come, and trusted in him to redeem him from sin

(**19:25** see p4). Jesus lived a perfect life of obedience to God's holy law, but was to death as though he had sinned against it. In his body, he took our sins upon himself and was punished in our place. When someone truly trusts Jesus for forgiveness, God takes their sin away and credits Jesus' righteousness to them. He declares them to be right with him. This justification is completely unearned and it brings its own responsibility. Having experienced this acceptance from God, that person is free to offer the same mercy and compassion to others.

- 4. God uses us (42:7-9 see p4)** The friends falsely accused Job of wrong, yet the one who has been wronged is used by God to bring them to salvation. Job mediates for them, offering a sacrifice to atone for their sin and prays for their salvation.

God accepts Job's prayer, and shows compassion and mercy to the friends, inviting them into a relationship with himself through the provision of a sacrifice and the prayer of Job as mediator.

Job has been accepted by God, and he shows his righteousness by mediating for his friends even though they have treated him so badly and have not apologised to him. God used Job to show compassion and mercy to the friends. We, of course, know that the Lord Jesus Christ, who willingly sacrificed himself for undeserving sinners (for us) acts as mediator and continues to intercede for us before God's throne. Because of him, we can come to God.

That is the compassion and mercy of God to all who are friends of Jesus.

5. God restores us (vv10-17 above). While Job was still suffering (v10), he confessed his sin, worshipped God and mediated for his friends. He did this before everything was restored to him, showing that he did fear God even when God took everything away from him.

God did not restore Job's fortunes as a reward for faithfulness. He was under no obligation to do this, as Job recognised (**2:10** see p4). He knew that anything God gave him was a gift of grace of grace from God, and God is free to give, take or restore if he so wishes. However, in restoring what he has taken, God is showing Job and us that he is no tyrant. God has taken but has given back more. **That is the compassion and mercy of God.**

Suffering has come to an end, and the joy and harmony of Chapter 1 is restored, but that is not the end of the story.

The end comes at the end

Job had to continue living in a fallen world.

- Although he had 10 more children, the graves of his first children were a painful reminder of death
- Although the boils healed, the scars they left were a reminder that our bodies are subject to decay
- Although he had twice as much wealth, he still had to live with the possibility that he could lose it all

Then Job died (v17 above). Despite the restoration of all he had lost, he still had to go the way of all flesh.

If we hope to see the end of suffering in this life, we will be utterly disappointed. God, in his compassion and mercy, may choose to bring any current suffering to an end and make our lives more comfortable, but

The end of suffering comes at the end of time

Job knew that and he had his sights set much further ahead than enjoying grandchildren and living off his pension. He was looking to a day yet to come. Job declared: **For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. ²⁶And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, (19:25-26).**

The end of the book of Job points forward to the day when Jesus returns to this earth to resurrect all who have died. Sinners will be resurrected to eternal death and saints to eternal life. On that day all the effects of sin will be reversed and the evil of suffering and of sin will be finished.

The blessings that God will pour out on us then will be far, far better than the blessings of health, family and finance that, like Job, we experience now. The blessings of the new heavens and the new earth will be much more real.

Through the book of Job, we have seen that God does not keep us from suffering, although he could. The normal Christian life will involve suffering, but God is not powerless in our suffering. He rules sovereignly over the universe, evil, death and Satan, all of which are defeated enemies and are being used by God for our eternal good and to **display his compassion and mercy**. In our suffering, God

- Meets with us, showing his power, justice and care
- Humbles us so that we learn to depend on him
- Justifies us through the sufferings of Christ
- Uses us in his service to see others saved
- One day will restore to us more blessings than we have lost through suffering.

That is the compassion and mercy of God in our suffering

**In the world you will have tribulation, but take heart; I (Jesus) have overcome the world
(John 16:33)**

23:3 Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat!

40:3-5 Then Job answered the LORD and said:⁴ "Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer you?"

I lay my hand on my mouth.⁵ I have spoken once, and I will not answer; twice, but I will proceed no further."

42:1-6 Then Job answered the LORD and said ² "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.³ '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.⁴ 'Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you make it known to me.'⁵ I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you ⁶ therefore I despise myself, and repent^[a] in dust and ashes."

42:7 After the LORD had spoken these words to Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite: "My anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.

19:25 For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth

42:7-9 After the LORD had spoken these words to Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite: "My anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. ⁸ Now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves. And my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly. For you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has." ⁹ So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did what the LORD had told them, and the LORD accepted Job's prayer.

2:10 Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?