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Sermon Notes

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The Testimony of a Blameless Man

Job 31:1-40

This morning, we return to our study of the Book of Job... and it is a very timely study for us, where we're at in history

2021 has been a challenging year, following the momentous events of 2020. Current events have pushed misery onto our collective consciousness, and Christians are aware of the magnitude of suffering around the world. We see the recent events in Afghanistan, the anguish of those seeking desperately to flee from the Taliban, even to the point of clinging to airplanes as they took off from the Kabul airport. We hear of yet another earthquake rocking Haiti, and hear of at least 2000 dying there. We thought we were reaching the end of the COVID crisis, then the virus mutates and the Delta variant comes on and the numbers start to surge again. All of this and many other current events make us realize the anguish of living in a world in bondage to death and pain and suffering because of Adam's sin.

Romans 5:12 sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned

Closer to us here at FBC, we are aware of all manners of sorrow that are pressing on the members of our church... individuals battling chronic sickness and pain that never seems to go away; others battling cancer for the third time or walking with loved ones who are; others struggling with loneliness, or the effects of aging, or unwanted singleness, or grown children who are rebelling from everything they were taught from infancy in the Christian faith—and their parents shedding countless tears for their wandering kids.

Beyond that, even if you personally are facing no severe hardships, no painful circumstances, yet if you have a compassionate heart you are grieving with those who are grieving... and battling your own fears and anxieties

What will I do if one of my children dies? How will I face that?

How can I endure a serious illness, or if I am seriously injured? Or if I lose my job and am unemployed for a long time? Or if my spouse dies? What will it be like to get older... to lose capabilities? How will I face that?

I believe God has given us the Book of Job to help us face the sorrows and pains of living in this sin-cursed world. It is given to us to help us SUFFER WELL... to shine in our faith, to radiate the light of hope in Jesus Christ... to learn to bring all our sorrows and pains and burdens to God, not to accuse him of wrongdoing and complain against him, and be bitter against God and speak words of unbelief

This book is given to fill up the sandbags of our faith, to make a buttress and a wall in preparation for the coming flood of sorrow... because it will most certainly come.

Ephesians 2:10 we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Some of the best good works God has for you to do before you leave this world will be while you are SUFFERING GREAT PAIN. God has gone ahead of you to prepare those works in advance. And part of that is to prepare YOU in advance to suffer well.

Now, as we come to Job 31, we are very late in the book. We have already seen the story of Job; he was introduced to us as a man blameless and upright, who feared God and shunned evil, a unique man on earth, who God singled out for praise before Satan. We have seen cascades of sorrows that came on him – the loss of all his wealth, the death in one instant of all ten of his children, the loss of his health. We have seen how Job at first did not question God, but rather praised him and said, **“The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away... may the name of the Lord be praised.”** We have seen his friends,

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar come to be with him, at first sympathetic to his pain... but then in three cycles of dialogs with Job, they increasingly lay on him the burden of their theology: that Job is suffering justly for some heinous patterns of secret sins... and those secret sins must be IMMENSE because his suffering is so immense. Job has again and again asserted his innocence, that he is NOT GUILTY of these immense secret sins... Job 31 is his final stand, his final defense.

As we listen to him, though, we also have laid out before our eyes one of the best descriptions in the Old Testament of a truly righteous man... what a blameless life really looks like. For three weeks, we are going to walk through these amazing words.

I. "Blameless and Upright" Explained

A. Job Was Introduced as "Blameless and Upright"... Here He Is!

Job 1:1 In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil.

Job 1:8 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."

B. Job's Final Stand... Chapter 31

1. At the end of this chapter, Job finishes his words of defense

Job 31:40 The words of Job are ended.

2. This is his final stand from the relentless onslaught he's been under

C. Under Assault by the Trials... and then by His Friends

1. The trials came upon him in wave upon wave

2. We learn from Job 1-2 and God's secret conversation with Satan that it was specifically because he WAS blameless and upright that Satan wanted to assault him and expose him, and that God permitted him to do it

3. It was specifically because Job was blameless and upright that God wanted to teach all succeeding generations that the problem of evil and suffering is complex and extends to innocent people who undergo immense agonies not directly related to their sins
4. So... that was God's purpose, to highlight Job as a blameless and upright sufferer of great affliction; and that was Satan's purpose as well... to expose Job as one kind of a fraud... that his blameless and upright track record was only because God had so lavishly blessed him and his family and all his possessions—Satan did not refute God or accuse him of specific sins, but just that it was because of those lavish blessings of prosperity and protection—“You have put a hedge around him and all that he has”
5. So the trials came... in wave after wave
 - a. The loss of all his oxen and donkeys and the servants watching them
 - b. Then, the loss of all his sheep and the servants watching them
 - c. Then, the loss of all his camels and the servants watching them
 - d. Then, finally, the loss of all ten of his children in one dreadful moment
 - e. Then... in Phase II, the loss of his health... afflicted with terrible sores, he had to scrape his skin with fragments of pottery, so great was his suffering
6. Then came the three friends: Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar
 - a. And they all came with the same theology
 - b. The “Law of Sowing and Reaping”
 - c. God is just and active in the world... the only possible explanation for Job's immense suffering is his immense wickedness
 - d. Since they had never seen his wickedness (in that there was none to see) the friends assume Job's wickedness must have

been done in secret and was now being exposed by God's just interventions and judgments

7. Throughout chapters 3-30, Job has again and again asserted his innocence, while his friends became more and more irritated with him and increase the savageness of their attacks
8. It culminated in this one, from Eliphaz:

Job 22:5-10 Is not your wickedness great? Are not your sins endless? ⁶ You demanded security from your brothers for no reason; you stripped men of their clothing, leaving them naked. ⁷ You gave no water to the weary and you withheld food from the hungry, ⁸ though you were a powerful man, owning land-- an honored man, living on it. ⁹ And you sent widows away empty-handed and broke the strength of the fatherless. ¹⁰ That is why snares are all around you, why sudden peril terrifies you

9. These are the very charges Job will now clearly refute in this lengthy defense
10. BUT for us, this chapter stands as a timeless description of what it truly looks like to be ***blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil***

D. Job Takes an Oath... Job Swears a Vow!

1. The language in this chapter is of a legal vow, like the kind people took in those days
2. "If I am guilty of this crime, may God strike me dead"
3. So, there is a long series of "IF" statements, with a corresponding "THEN" resolutions...

Job 31:5-8 "If I have walked in falsehood or my foot has hurried after deceit-- ⁶ let God weigh me in honest scales and he will know that I am blameless-- ⁷ if my steps have turned from the path, if my heart has been led by my eyes, or if my hands have been defiled, ⁸ then may others eat what I have sown, and may my crops be uprooted.

4. But the basic idea is, "If I am not what I appear to be—a blameless and upright man—may God curse me and everything about me."

E. A Magnificent Man Leading an Amazing Life!

1. He is a role model for all men who have ever followed him since that day, although the New Testament would add many features
2. But in the issues Job addresses, it is impossible to do better

F. Proverbs 31's Answer for Men!

1. For years, many have known about the Proverbs 31 woman
2. Sometimes featured in Mother's Day sermons... and some confess how intimidated this perfect woman makes all women feel
3. She is the "wife of noble character" who is relentlessly active in doing good for her husband, her children, all the members of their household, and the whole community
4. Daunting, perhaps intimidating... maybe best to be seen as a goal to be strived for
5. So it is here with this man Job... Job 31 is the male equivalent of Proverbs 31

G. Worthy of Multiple Weeks' Study... So Just an Overview Today

II. Elements of Job's Blamelessness

- A commitment to absolute sexual purity (vs. 1-12)
- A pattern of just treatment for his servants (vs. 13-15)
- A lifestyle of active service to the poor (vs. 16-23)
- A rejection of all idols, especially wealth (vs. 24-28)
- Graciousness to enemies, hospitality to strangers (vs. 29-32)
- Righteous business practices (vs. 38-39)

This is an astounding list of comprehensive holiness... This did not result in the self-focused piety of a reclusive monk, fasting and praying in a cave far from all other human beings... but it was an active, hard-

working holiness that was lived out in a busy life of commerce in the midst of human society.

Job was not a perfect man. Only Jesus Christ in all human history can claim that title. But Job was a blameless and upright man, who lived out a healthy fear of God in all his ways. Therefore, as the Apostle Paul said **“Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ,”** I think Job can do the same for us in our day. All these themes are still very relevant today!

A. A Commitment to Absolute Sexual Purity (vs. 1-12)

1. Purity from the heart... battling lust from within

Job 31:1 "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl.

2. Reason why? The fear of the Lord... who sees EVERYTHING!

Job 31:2-4 For what is man's lot from God above, his heritage from the Almighty on high? ³ Is it not ruin for the wicked, disaster for those who do wrong? ⁴ Does he not see my ways and count my every step?

3. His oath of a lifestyle of pure behavior

Job 31:5-8 If I have walked in falsehood or my foot has hurried after deceit-- ⁶ let God weigh me in honest scales and he will know that I am blameless-- ⁷ if my steps have turned from the path, if my heart has been led by my eyes, or if my hands have been defiled, ⁸ then may others eat what I have sown, and may my crops be uprooted.

4. His oath of purity from adultery

Job 31:9-10 "If my heart has been enticed by a woman, or if I have lurked at my neighbor's door, ¹⁰ then may my wife grind another man's grain, and may other men sleep with her.

5. His awareness of the devastating judgment from God that could come

Job 31:11-12 For that would have been shameful, a sin to be judged. ¹² It is a fire that burns to Destruction; it would have uprooted my harvest.

Sexual purity is such a weakness for men today, it will be beneficial for all the men listening to my words right now to come back next week and walk with me through these essential verses, so we can imitate this godly man!

B. A Pattern of Just Treatment for His Servants (vs. 13-15)

Job 31:13 "If I have denied justice to my menservants and maidservants when they had a grievance against me

1. This will be gathered together with the next section on Job's mercy on the poor and needy
2. Nowadays we call this and the next section "Social justice"
3. The issue here has to do with the workers in his estate—it was sadly customary for many wealthy men to treat workers—the common laborers in his fields or who served in his house—to treat them not much better than beasts of burden
4. Job absolutely never did this!
5. If any of his servants—men or women—ever felt he had wronged them, or if they had some case against him, he heard them carefully, saw that their concerns were suitably addressed
6. Look at his reason why: FEAR OF GOD and RESPECT FOR GOD'S IMAGE

Job 31:13-15 "If I have denied justice to my menservants and maidservants when they had a grievance against me, ¹⁴ what will I do when God confronts me? What will I answer when called to account? ¹⁵ Did not he who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same one form us both within our mothers?

7. Both Job and his servants were human beings, created in the image of God; so Job treated them with dignity, because judgment day is coming when God will confront him about this!

C. A Lifestyle of Active Service to the Poor (vs. 16-23)

Job 31:16-23 "If I have denied the desires of the poor or let the eyes of the widow grow weary, ¹⁷ if I have kept my bread to myself, not sharing

it with the fatherless--¹⁸ but from my youth I reared him as would a father, and from my birth I guided the widow--¹⁹ if I have seen anyone perishing for lack of clothing, or a needy man without a garment,²⁰ and his heart did not bless me for warming him with the fleece from my sheep,²¹ if I have raised my hand against the fatherless, knowing that I had influence in court,²² then let my arm fall from the shoulder, let it be broken off at the joint.²³ For I dreaded destruction from God, and for fear of his splendor I could not do such things.

1. For Job, it was not enough not to do harm to others... **not** to sleep with a neighbor's wife, **not** to treat his servants with harsh injustice... just to keep yourself from evil is not enough
2. A godly man must actively do good to others

Confucius vs. Jesus

Confucius said, five centuries before Christ, "Do not impose on others what you do not wish for yourself."

Jesus said "Do to others what you would have them do for you."

The first is NEGATIVE and EASIER... the priest and Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan did NOTHING for the bleeding man either way – they did not assault him, but neither did they help him

Loving your neighbor as yourself requires energetic, costly activity...

As you spend money on yourself, spend it on others

As you spend time and energy on yourself, spend your time and energy on others

As you think constantly about your personal desires and comforts and pleasures and needs, think in the same way about the desires and comforts and pleasures and needs of others

That is MUCH HARDER... much more effort

And Job did it!

3. Job especially sacrificed for those who were poor and needy... the widow and the orphan
4. We will walk more carefully through this in two weeks, but look at how he realized that his abundance was not just for himself alone, but it was made to share with the needy; look how he reared a fatherless boy up from childhood as if he were one of his own; look how he guided the widow—perhaps with financial advice and protection, since there was no man in the house; look how he searched out those who were insufficiently clothed and made sure that they got what they needed from his abundant flocks; look how he used his influence in court to further the cause of the widow and orphan instead of taking advantage of them
5. If... then: Job speaks a CURSE on himself if he has failed the poor and needy

Job 31:16-17 "If I have denied the desires of the poor or let the eyes of the widow grow weary, ¹⁷ if I have kept my bread to myself, not sharing it with the fatherless...

Job 31:19-21 if I have seen anyone perishing for lack of clothing, or a needy man without a garment, ²⁰ and his heart did not bless me for warming him with the fleece from my sheep, ²¹ if I have raised my hand against the fatherless, knowing that I had influence in court,

THEN: (here comes the curse)

Job 31:22 then let my arm fall from the shoulder, let it be broken off at the joint.

6. Job's reason: again, the FEAR OF THE LORD

Job 31:23 For I dreaded destruction from God, and for fear of his splendor I could not do such things.

He knew God, the holy God, would hold him accountable for how he used his wealth, and whether he did with God's money what God the true owner and master wanted him to do (for Job knew he was merely a steward of God's possessions)

He also spoke of the GLORY OF GOD... the splendor of God as a consuming fire, ready to avenge the poor and widow and orphan

D. A Rejection of All Idols, Especially Wealth (vs. 24-28)

Job 31:24-28 "If I have put my trust in gold or said to pure gold, 'You are my security,'²⁵ if I have rejoiced over my great wealth, the fortune my hands had gained,²⁶ if I have regarded the sun in its radiance or the moon moving in splendor,²⁷ so that my heart was secretly enticed and my hand offered them a kiss of homage,²⁸ then these also would be sins to be judged, for I would have been unfaithful to God on high.

1. This comes down to Job's heart religion... what he really trusted in
2. Was his gold really his confidence? Did he really count on his wealth, all his riches, as his strong tower and fortress against the day of calamity?
3. Did he gloat over his gold and go look at the coins and fondle them and let their glow put the fire of avarice in his heart... sheer love of money? One of the greatest idols in human history—MONEY
4. Beyond this, Job mentions the worship of celestial bodies... the beauty of the radiant sun, the softer gleam of the moon... common basis of pagan religions all over the world—worshiping the stars
5. Job's heart religion was freed from IDOLATRY... God and God alone was his trust

E. Graciousness to Enemies, Hospitality to Strangers (vs. 29-32)

Job 31:29-32 "If I have rejoiced at my enemy's misfortune or gloated over the trouble that came to him--³⁰ I have not allowed my mouth to sin by invoking a curse against his life--³¹ if the men of my household have never said, 'Who has not had his fill of Job's meat?'--³² but no stranger had to spend the night in the street, for my door was always open to the traveler

1. It is easy for men to become vindictive against their enemies
2. All great men, powerful men, wealthy men have enemies

3. Job did not wish his enemies any harm... he yearned for them to be blessed
4. This means he did not conspire against them and secretly orchestrate their destruction; actually when they fell sick or got into trouble, he prayed for them or grieved over their distress
5. Job also mentions his pattern of lavish sacrificial hospitality here... opening his home to the wayfarer and stranger

F. Complete Integrity, Living to Please God not Men (vs. 33-34)

Job 31:33-34 if I have concealed my sin as men do, by hiding my guilt in my heart ³⁴ because I so feared the crowd and so dreaded the contempt of the clans that I kept silent and would not go outside

1. This is an assertion of complete integrity; this is key to his entire defense
2. I cared infinitely more what God thought than what any human court or audience thought
3. I did not conceal all this secret wickedness that you (my friends—Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar) are assuming I committed
4. I am what I appear to be... a man living blamelessly in the fear of the Lord

G. Righteous Business Practices (vs. 38-39)

Job 31:38-39 if my land cries out against me and all its furrows are wet with tears, ³⁹ if I have devoured its yield without payment or broken the spirit of its tenants

1. Job dealt fairly with his business partners... tenant farmers who worked the land and were entitled to their share of the profits
2. He paid what was agreed in a timely fashion
3. I mentioned “day laborers” in India to you a few weeks ago... those who absolutely rely on their wage at the end of the day so they can feed their families. Imagine the injustice of failing to pay the workers who worked all day in your fields... knowing that those

poor people had very little recourse to take a powerful man like Job to court and win...

4. Job was fair, even generous in his wages and his determination that each worker be paid so that they would not weep at the injustice and go home empty-handed to their hungry families... with spirits crushed and bodies worn-out from fruitless labor

III. Job's Final Claim of Blamelessness (vs. 35-37)

A. So We Have Seen Job's Astonishing Resume of Righteousness

- A commitment to absolute sexual purity (vs. 1-12)
- A pattern of just treatment for his servants (vs. 13-15)
- A lifestyle of active service to the poor (vs. 16-23)
- A rejection of all idols, especially wealth (vs. 24-28)
- Graciousness to enemies, hospitality to strangers (vs. 29-32)
- Righteous business practices (vs. 38-39)

B. Toward the End, He Interjects a Bold Declaration of His Holiness to Almighty God

Job 31:35-37 "Oh, that I had someone to hear me! I sign now my defense-- let the Almighty answer me; let my accuser put his indictment in writing. ³⁶ Surely I would wear it on my shoulder, I would put it on like a crown. ³⁷ I would give him an account of my every step; like a prince I would approach him.

C. He is Willing to Put This Confession in Writing

1. He is confident he could walk into the presence of Almighty God with this resume, and God would not refute a word of it
- 2. Yet Job calls God his "accuser"... and this is his greatest flaw!**
3. He does not realize that Job has somewhat bought into the theology of his friends... that implied in Job's suffering is an accusation by God of Job's sinfulness...

4. God never once spoke an accusation against Job...
5. But Job acts as though God were his enemy, his legal adversary... and that the truth of Job's actual lifestyle is on Job's side—that in a day in court, the truth would vindicate Job over God's unfair treatment of him
6. Job imagines he would be walking into the presence of the infinitely majestic God as if he were a prince, wearing a robe of righteousness
7. Yet he does not realize that even Job's astonishing resume of righteousness is short of the perfection God requires to be in his presence

Isaiah 33:14 "Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?"

8. Job, prior to God appearing and speaking to him out of an overwhelming tempest, was full of his own righteousness
9. This in no way disqualifies him from heaven, but God will have to humble him and make him see his need for grace

IV. Or Else... May I Be Accursed! (vs. 40)

Job 31:40 then let briers come up instead of wheat and weeds instead of barley." The words of Job are ended.

- A. This is the Language of the Curse... thorns and briers are symbols of God's curse... I what I have said is a lie, may I be accursed!!

V. Imitating Such a Role Model

A. Job is a Staggeringly Righteous Man, Worthy of Imitation

B. BUT FIRST... We Must Come to Christ!

1. Job was about to be humbled by the infinite glory of God
2. Christ himself said it plainly:

Mark 10:18 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good-- except God alone.

3. What we need is perfect righteousness... Paul after citing his resume of self-righteousness, rejected it all as garbage in comparison with Christ

Philippians 3:7-9 But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ-- the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

4. All sinners tend to promote their own righteousness in some way
5. Almost certainly your righteousness falls far short of Job's
6. And if Job needed Christ to save him, how much more do we commonplace sinners
7. Christ alone had the perfect righteousness that God requires for heaven
8. And he offers that as a gift to us all

2 Corinthians 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God

C. BUT Having Come to Christ, "How Then Shall We Live?"

1. Job is an admirable role model for a righteous life
2. He had an internal purity, a heart holiness that was astounding
3. He was committed to righteousness in the eyes of the invisible God, not merely what would make him popular
4. We would do well to imitate him

D. As You Look at this Chapter, YEARN FOR IT... PRAY FOR IT... ASK GOD the SPIRIT to WORK IT IN YOU!