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Sermon Notes

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An Avalanche of Sorrows

Job 1-2

This morning, we begin walking through this masterpiece of Hebrew wisdom, this incomparably deep book of Job.

This morning, we stand alongside this godly man and watch him go through the greatest avalanche of sorrows that ever crashed down on any living man in a single day.

This morning, we peer at the cold words on the page that recount a hot trial that the loving and sovereign God willed upon the choicest servant that lived on planet Earth... the cold words will become living lessons burned into our hearts only by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

However, this morning, as we read the account of Job's sufferings, we do so from the perspective of life beyond the cross of Jesus Christ, life beyond the empty tomb of Jesus Christ. We seek to learn the timeless lessons of suffering well from Job... but as we do, we don't forget what we have learned in the New Testament of Christ and his triumph over sin and the grave.

This morning, we look back at the immeasurable sorrows of a godly man, having been blessed by the infinite sorrows of a perfect man, Jesus Christ, whose suffering on the cross atones for the sins of all who believe, and whose resurrection victory answers all the questions of earthly suffering.

Yet, even knowing that Christ died for our sins and rose for our glory, we still have much to learn about earthly suffering. We are not yet done with our salvation from sin... salvation comes to us in stages. Some of you listening this morning have come into this sermon dead in your transgression and sins... the earthly sufferings these two chapters describe are as nothing compared to the eternal torments of hell. But the good news is that Christ drank the cup of hell for us on the cross so that none of his children will ever be condemned to that eternal misery. Trust in Christ! Receive the gift of forgiveness of sins NOW! But it may be that God may need to bring a measure of sorrow into your life to wean you from earth and teach you to look to eternity. God may use earthly sorrows to bring you to Christ. So may it be.

The rest of you have already found Christ, have already received the gift of full forgiveness of sins... but you are not done being saved either. You are in the journey of sanctification... God is purifying your hearts and lives from the pervasive effects of sin and the fires of suffering are essential to that journey of salvation. We do not make much progress in holiness through bright sunny days of earthly ease and prosperity, as pleasant as those days are. But God must hurt us to save us. He must bring us through the refiner's fire to burn the corruption from our mixed and changeable hearts. So we are told in another, later book of the Bible:

James 1:2-4 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. ⁴ Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

That text will be central to our meditations as we walk through the entire book of Job. Because the problem of pain and sorrow and suffering is the most poignant of all the theological problems on earth. It is when we HURT, when loved ones HURT or are DYING or even DIE... that's when our souls are most rocked

by temptations, by Satan's shrewd flaming arrows of doubt and malicious accusations. We NEED the Book of Job!

So, this morning, we begin to walk through this incomparable drama... and we start with the account God gives us in Job 1-2

I. The Greatness of Job (Job 1:1-5)

Job 1:1-5 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. ² He had seven sons and three daughters, ³ and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East. ⁴ His sons used to take turns holding feasts in their homes, and they would invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. ⁵ When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would send and have them purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, "Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." This was Job's regular custom.

A. Job's Greatness Asserted by the Holy Spirit (in the Text) (vs. 3)

"He was the greatest man among all the people of the East"

B. Job's Greatness Asserted by Almighty God (1:8; 2:3)

Job 1:8 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."

Job 2:3 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. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason."

1. For me, it is amazing the pride that God takes in his creatures!

2. At the end of the book, God boasts about the capabilities of his animals, like the speed of the ostrich, the powerful gallop of the horse, the soaring of the eagle... God delights in the specific capabilities of his creatures; but nothing brings him more glory than his chosen and redeemed children
3. When God says to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job," I believe that is a foretaste of heaven in which all of the redeemed will be lifted up for special consideration, so our rewards and achievements will each receive their due honor
4. BUT there are some special servants of God... men and women whose character and sufferings and achievements are greater by far than the norm... "There is no one else on earth like him"
5. Job was one of those

C. Attributes of Job's Greatness

1. "Blameless and upright, feared God and shunned evil"
 - a. Blameless means that there is no record against him
 - i) Satan himself doesn't question this... he has nothing to accuse Job about!
 - ii) No witness for the prosecution could be called to give testimony of Job's sin
 - b. Upright = righteous... straight... correct... lined up with God's moral standard; standing up boldly for what is right
 - c. Feared God = pious... fearing to sin because he knows God is always watching him... later he will call God "O watcher of men"; he knew very well that all creation lies open before God's eyes and that he would have to give an account to God for all his actions; he feared God's power and judgment; so "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 9:10)
 - d. Shunned evil... stayed away from all sin; hated evil; avoided it; made a covenant with his eyes not to look lustfully at a girl; would not defraud anyone or hurt anyone... he **TURNED ASIDE** from all evil... refused it, would not walk in it

2. Secret piety:

Job 1:5 When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would send and have them purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, "Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." This was Job's regular custom.

- a. The best account of a father in the Bible... I even put Abraham second to Job
- b. He continued to shepherd his children spiritually after they were fully grown adults
- c. He knew that feasting can corrupt people; prosperity is dangerous... so after feasting he would seek to purify his children spiritually
- d. He offered sacrifices for them, because he knew they might be secretly cursing God in their hearts
- e. Keep this in mind when you consider the terrible accusations his so-called friends would later make of him... that he was a profoundly wicked man; but they have no evidence, they've never seen it, there are no witnesses to Job's wickedness; so the only way is if he did it in secret... but Job's piety was no sham... it was genuine, and reached into the heart and into the secret lives of his children
- f. And Job did this REGULARLY... this was his HABIT... he was a very consistent man

Application: You fathers... learn from this incredible example of godly fatherhood! Pray for your growing kids... set them a pure example; and pray for the secrets of their hearts

D. Family Prosperity: TEN CHILDREN!

1. Seven sons and three daughters... all grown to adulthood
2. His family line is broad and his legacy seems secure

E. Material Prosperity

1. Job was also fabulously wealthy
2. In the agrarian economy of the ancient world, the listing of these animals was real wealth... 7000 sheep, 3000 camels; just pause on that last number... what do 3000 camels even look like? A matrix of 55 camels x 55 camels! 500 yoke of oxen = 1000 oxen;

II. Satan's First Test of Job (Job 1:6-19)

A. Satan Approaches

Job 1:6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.

1. It is the heavenly council... God ruling in the heavenly realms
2. The NIV has "angels" coming to present themselves to God, but the text says "sons of God"
3. They almost certainly are angels, because in Job 38:7 it says that the "sons of God" were celebrating while God laid the foundations of the earth... so no human beings existed at that time
4. The heavenly council involves God descending from the highest heaven to sit enthroned and all his holy angels assembling around him to present themselves before him to serve him and do his will
5. Satan is a fallen angel, who sought to topple God from his throne and he comes along with the other angels

B. God questions Satan

Job 1:7 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."

- ### C. Satan's restlessness: roaming through the earth, moving back and forth over it (vs. 7)
1. Spurgeon: **"He marched everywhere like a king in his own dominions, unhindered and unchallenged"**

2. Like when Satan takes Jesus to a high place and shows him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor and says "All this has been given to me"
3. BUT Revelation 12 says Satan was defeated in heaven and cast down to the earth, and it says he is filled with rage because he knows his time is short
4. AND Jesus said

Matthew 12:43 "When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it."

5. Satan is both confident and restless, arrogant and rageful

Isaiah 57:20-21 the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud. ²¹ "There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked."

6. Satan has a deep-seated HATRED for God and all his children, a relentless malice and vast powers of destruction

D. God Boasts About Job (as we've seen)

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."

E. Satan's Accusation

Job 1:9-11 "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. ¹⁰ "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. ¹¹ But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face."

1. Satan means "accuser"... he accuses BOTH Job and God
2. He says that Job is essentially in it for the money; he accuses Job of being a prosperity gospel man; and of God for abetting it

3. This also shows one of the points I will make later... Satan is RESTRICTED... a lion on a leash; God is faithful to his children and will not let any of them be tempted beyond what they can bear
4. God erects a protective wall around Job and all his possessions Satan calls a “hedge”... something he cannot penetrate
5. And Satan has to ask permission of God to do anything to Job
6. This is vital for us to realize; all of Satan’s approaches to us are filtered through the throne of God; he zealously guards his children, but does allow some flaming arrows to come our way
7. And Satan’s accusation here is disgusting... that if God takes all of Job’s possessions, Job will curse God to his face

F. God Grants Satan Permission... But Limits It

Job 1:12 And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand."

1. It is so important for the tempted to remember that God is in control

1 Corinthians 10:13 God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

G. Satan Goes Out from the Presence of the Lord (vs. 12)

1. Satan and the demons are not continually in God’s presence...
2. James tells us that the demons “believe” that there is one God... that means they don’t generally see him

H. The Trial is Unleashed

1. Verses 13-19 display wave upon wave of agony cascading upon Job’s head
2. The sorrows are overwhelming
3. First, the loss of all his oxen and donkeys... Sabeans are raiders, so thieves broke in and stole from him

4. WHILE HE WAS STILL SPEAKING... wave upon wave;
5. Second: sheep and servants taken by the “fire of God which fell from the sky”... lightning strikes causing a prairie fire that quickly engulfed all the sheep and Job’s shepherd, killing them all
6. WHILE HE WAS STILL SPEAKING
7. Third: the Chaldeans swept in and stole all 3000 camels! Gone in an instant! And they slaughtered Job’s servants as well
8. WHILE HE WAS STILL SPEAKING
9. Finally... the worst... ALL TEN of Job’s children dead:

Job 1:18-19 "Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, ¹⁹ when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

10. What a parent fears the most; few tragedies if any reach the level of losing one of your children; but ALL OF THEM... in one instant?

III. The Patience of Job (Job 1:20-22)

Job 1:20-22 At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship ²¹ and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised." ²²In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.

A. Job’s reaction is stunning...

1. He humbles himself under God’s mighty hand
2. He tears his clothes and shaves his head as a sign of mourning
3. He is very aware of his mortality and of the temporary nature of all earthly blessings... NAKED I ENTERED THE WORLD, NAKED I WILL LEAVE IT

4. This shows us that truly every last one of us will experience the same stripping that Job did... on our death bed, we will lose everything we ever owned in this world

Mac Woody's three homes; Mac, one of my best friends ever in my ministry here at FBC, a man whose shoes I could not carry; one of the most consistently cheerful men I have ever known; a man who dearly loved his wife Eulene and his three children and many grandchildren; a man who died in faith with a strong testimony; in life, he had three homes... the home he lived in on Garrett Road here in Durham, an ancestral mountain home in Otto in the far west of our state, and a nice little vacation home near Carolina Beach. He generously allowed me and my family to use both the mountain home and beach home for vacations...

When I visited him right before he died, he was at the Croasdaile Nursing Home; he had a single room, a bed, and could sit up in bed; he was cheerful in the Lord as always; but I thought to myself, "All three of Mac's homes are gone from him; he will never live in any of them ever again." We didn't discuss that, but he truly accepted the loss of all things, knowing that his true inheritance is in heaven

Hebrews 11:13, 16 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth...: they were longing for a better country-- a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

B. Job's Patience Means He Worshiped, Trusted God, and Did Not Question God or Charge Him with Wrongdoing

1. People ask me, "Pastor, it is ever okay to be angry at God?"
2. This text tells me the answer... NEVER! It is always a sin to charge God with wrongdoing, because God never does anything wrong at all

3. Job's deepest thoughts were beginning to come together in sin, and they will emerge later; but at this early stage, he worships God

IV. Satan's Second Test of Job (Job 2:1-9; 11-13)

A. Satan is Relentless...

Job 2:1-2 On another day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them to present himself before him. ² And the LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it."

1. He can never repent; he is too proud to admit failure
2. He will never think differently about anything, for repentance is a gift of God's grace
3. And he will never cease doing what he does...

John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy

B. God Vindicates Job (as we have seen)

Job 2:3 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. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason."

C. Satan Renewed His Accusation... despite his failure to get Job to blaspheme

D. Satan DOES Know Human Nature

Job 2:4-5 "Skin for skin!" Satan replied. "A man will give all he has for his own life. ⁵ But stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face."

1. Health is essential to our happiness in this world
2. People in constant agony cannot enjoy anything in this world

3. Many of you have been through massive and chronic pain, or someone you love has
4. You know this is true... we would give ANYTHING for health
5. In the United States alone, people spent over 3.5 trillion dollars on health care last year... that's about \$11,000/person
6. Job in his physical misery had lost all his appetite

Job 6:6-7 Is tasteless food eaten without salt, or is there flavor in the white of an egg? ⁷ I refuse to touch it; such food makes me ill.

E. God Permits Satan... But Limits Him Again

Job 2:6-8 The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life." ⁷ So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head. ⁸ Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes.

F. Job's Wife, Job's Friends... Part of Satan's Temptation

Job 2:9 His wife said to him, "Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!"

Job 2:11-13 When Job's three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him. ¹² When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him; they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads. ¹³ Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was.

V. The Patience of Job Deepened (Job 2:10)

Job 2:9-10 His wife said to him, "Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!" ¹⁰ He replied, "You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.

A. Notice that Job's Patience is Thinning

1. There are some deep-seated doubts that are beginning to form in Job's soul
2. They will come pouring out over the next many chapters... a river of words, hot searing pain
3. He almost certainly is sinning in what he THOUGHT... but he does no sin in what he SAID

B. But He Is Still a Picture of Wisdom

Psalm 141:3 Set a guard over my mouth, O LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips.

VI. Ten Lessons and their Applications

- A. Earthly prosperity is temporary... so store up treasure in heaven
- B. God is sovereign... so humble yourself and trust him
- C. Satan is a powerful adversary... so learn his schemes
- D. The heavenly realms are hidden but impactful... so learn about them
- E. Human godliness is precious to God... so pursue it
- F. God limits Satan's power... so rely on God's protection
- G. Suffering is deep and inevitable... so prepare for it, and suffer well
- H. Patience in suffering is essential... so develop it
- I. Providence is mysterious... so learn, and trust God
- J. God is good and loving... so draw near to him in Christ

Christ shines radiantly against this black backdrop...

Job was "blameless and upright, who feared God and shunned evil"

Jesus was infinitely greater... perfect in all respects, completely sinless, the “radiance of God’s glory and exact representation of God’s nature”; he “loved righteousness and hated wickedness” at a level even Job couldn’t touch

Job was vastly wealthy and lost everything without any cause at all

Jesus was infinitely wealthier... enthroned in heaven at the right hand of his Father, who did not consider it robbery to be equal to God – owner of all things because he made all things; who chose to become poor, to be stripped of everything... to humble himself and become a servant to everyone

Job was afflicted with terrible sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head, but he survived. Satan was not permitted to take his life.

Jesus laid down his life through the painful and shameful death on the cross... he made himself nothing and was obedient to God even to death on the cross. He allowed Satan to take his life. So while Job did not charge God with any wrongdoing initially, he eventually questioned God’s justice and had to repent. Jesus was the perfect display of God’s justice as our substitute... the only truly innocent sufferer there ever was...

Romans 3:25-26 God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished-- ²⁶ he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

Job’s example can teach us patience in suffering... but Jesus is the only Savior... his suffering stands infinitely above Job’s suffering and redeems us from all our sins. Job is our example, Jesus is our Savior.