

OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

What Would You Say to Comfort Job?

Lesson 60

(Guest Speaker: Dr. Stephen Trammell, Executive Pastor)

Pain and suffering throughout the landscape of humanity continue to remind us of the reality of living in a fallen world. We wrestle with the penetrating question of why God would allow pain and suffering to saturate the canvas of our existence. It is very difficult to consider our plight without Job's story coming to mind. If there were ever a person who did not deserve the onslaught of pain and suffering, that person would be Job. He was a righteous man and feared God. He loved his family and shunned evil.

In his book, *The Problem of Pain*, C. S. Lewis painted a powerful verbal picture when he wrote, "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."¹ How has God used pain in your life on a personal level? Has God amplified His voice in your life through the avenue of pain?

After experiencing the devastating loss of five children and being a three-time cancer survivor by age thirty-two, Erica McNeal affirmed, "God will allow us to be stretched beyond our human capabilities in order to show us our need for Him, to deepen our faith, and to show us that HIS strength is limitless!"² Perhaps you have known people who have navigated the terrain of pain and suffering and come through the experience closer to God.

My assignment for our time together is to answer this question, "What would you say to comfort Job if he came to your office?" In other words, if Job chose to come see the Executive Pastor of Champion Forest Baptist Church, what would I share with him to encourage him? Now this ought to be interesting! As we walk through this experience together, be thinking about what you would say to Job if he came to meet with you.

To set this up, let's assume that Job is coming to see me after being afflicted the second time. "So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.⁸ And he took a piece of broken pottery with which to scrape himself while he sat in the ashes" (Job 2:7-8 ESV). Satan had already attacked Job's family, now he is

¹ Lewis, C. S. *The Problem of Pain* (New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 91.

² McNeal, Erica. *Good Grief: How to Create an Oasis When Life is a Desert* (Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press, 2012), 125.

attacking Job's body. In addition to his affliction, Job's wife incited him to curse God and die. She wondered why Job was stilling holding on to his integrity. Job is now broken and devastated and still did not sin in all that he said.

Using your sanctified imagination, consider the atmosphere of Job walking into my office afflicted with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head. Job sits before me and our dialogue begins. I have left space below for you to jot down a few notes as I share verbally and leverage Power Point. You can also read the highlights of Job's journey in the adjacent section and then I will end with our points for home.

What I Would Say to Comfort Job:

1. God's _____ will be your _____.

2. God is _____ and ____ are _____.

3. God will _____ your _____.

4. God has the _____.

5. You are _____ for _____.

HIGHLIGHTING JOB'S JOURNEY

Our church family has been reading through the Bible chronologically this year and I have had the joy of writing daily devotionals in sequence with our daily readings. I have included a selection of daily devotionals that I have written recently that touch on Job's journey. Let them serve as a source of encouragement to you as you consider the adversity Job faced and how he responded to his circumstances. My prayer is that your daily walk with the Lord will be enhanced and that your passion for the Lord will increase. One of the most important disciplines for your spiritual development is reading and feeding on God's Word.³

Proper Perspective

"Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. ²¹And 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.'" Job 1:20-21 (ESV)

Have you ever wondered why God allows bad things to happen to good people? When you read about the life of Job and the severity of the adversity he faced, you come away feeling that life is unfair. Job was upright, blameless, turned from evil, and feared God. He had experienced tremendous familial blessing and financial blessing. Job was a godly man who had it all and then lost it all.

His story is heartbreaking and his response to adversity is inspiring. Instead of being bitter, resentful, and angry, Job chose to praise God in the midst of his suffering. Job demonstrated the value of having a proper perspective when going through seasons of adversity. He acknowledged the frailty of his own humanity and the reality of God's sovereignty. Job declared, "The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away, blessed be the name of the LORD." Job chose to bless the Lord in the midst of his severe trauma, grief, and loss. Instead of magnifying what he lost, Job recognized what he had left and magnified the Lord.

You don't want to go through what Job went through. However, you can respond to adversity the way Job did by living life from God's perspective. Ask God to help you see your circumstances from His eternal perspective. Instead of focusing on your circumstances, focus on the Creator who loves you and who will give you the grace to match what you face. In brokenness and humility, cry out to God and receive His divine enabling.

³ Access my daily online devotionals: www.championforest.org/guide/devotionals

Humility University

“Truly I know that it is so: But how can a man be in the right before God? ³ If one wished to contend with him, one could not answer him once in a thousand times.” Job 9:2-3 (ESV)

Have you come to grips with your finiteness? Have you discovered how big God is and how small you are? For a human being to try to grasp the awesomeness of God is like a gnat trying to grasp the awesomeness of a Boeing 747 commercial airliner. We are finite; God is infinite. We are limited; God is unlimited.

Job presents a loaded question, “How can a man be in the right before God?” As Job is navigating the rugged terrain of tribulation, he is contemplating his personal identity in light of God’s holiness. Job is cognizant of his own human condition before the Lord Almighty. In humility, Job acknowledges the vastness of God within the velocity of his own personal struggle.

Are you living in light of the reality of God’s nature and character? Do you embrace a posture of humility as you consider the wonder and glory of God? When you walk through a season of uncertainty or paddle through tumultuous waters, you will be drawn into contemplating the reality of your existence. You will begin to acknowledge your dependency upon God and your awareness of His holiness will be heightened.

How can you be right with God? What can you do? The bad news is that you cannot be right with God based on your personal effort or personal righteousness. In and of yourself, you will always fall short of the glory of God. The good news is that Jesus has closed the gap that separates you from God. Jesus did what you could not do so that you could benefit from His atonement. In Christ, you are made right with God!

Love, Life, and Compassion

“You have granted me life and steadfast love, and your care has preserved my spirit.” Job 10:12 (ESV)

Job was in a season of desperation. He knew calamity on a first name basis. Surrounded by an inner circle of friends, Job made a profound statement about God's provision. In the midst of severe adversity and extreme suffering, Job chose to look up even when he was completely down.

Can you echo Job's statement of faith? God has granted you life. You were God's idea. God created you and planted you so that you can bloom for His glory. You are alive today because God has given you life. What are you doing with the life God has given you?

God has lavished you with His steadfast love. You matter to God. Your value has already been established when God gave His only Son to die for you on the cross two thousand years ago. That's how much God loves you and values you. Don't let the devil stick a clearance label on your life. Jesus purchased you by His shed blood. The value of your life is priceless!

What sustains you? What keeps you going? God's compassion and tender care preserve you. He is the source of your strength and the reason for your existence. God will see you through the seasons of uncertainty and will help you overcome the obstacles that seek to divert your focus. God cares about you and everything you care about. You are His treasure and He keeps your tears in a bottle. Nothing bypasses God's awareness. He knows where you are and just what you need right now. Will you rest in His care and receive His personal touch ministry?

Brevity of Life

“Man who is born of a woman is few of days and full of trouble. ² He comes out like a flower and withers; he flees like a shadow and continues not.” Job 14:1-2 (ESV)

Job confronts his human condition. He acknowledges the brevity of life and the certainty of death. Job identifies the presence of pain and tribulation in this fallen world. In anguish of soul, Job considers his life and weighs the impact of his circumstances.

Sometimes life seems to race by like the flash of a camera and at other times life seems to slow down and emerge at the pace of a canoe on a still pond. The common denominator is the brevity of life. In light of eternity, life on earth is so brief. It is difficult to fathom that a person's life can be condensed to the dash between the date of one's birth and one's death.

- “Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.” James 4:14 (ESV)

Will your dash make an eternal difference? Will you allow God to use you for His glory? You may have a few more decades of living on this earth or you may only

have a few months. What will you do with the time you have left? Invest the rest of your life in that which has eternal value. Stop fretting over the things in this life that erode your peace and evaporate your passion for the Lord. Focus on the love God has for you and the love God wants you to express to a lost and dying world through you.

Jesus warned us to anticipate tribulation in this world. Rejoice! Jesus has overcome the world and He lives in you.

My Redeemer Lives

*“For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth.
26 And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, 27
whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart
faints within me!”* Job 19:25-27 (ESV)

When you are going through a season of adversity the natural proclivity is to turn inward. You slide into the posture of being consumed with how you are feeling and how you are doing and drift into self-pity. Pain has the power to redirect your focus.

Job unveiled his inward thoughts and the agony of his soul. He expressed his hurt and his disappointment with his current reality. Three so-called friends, who just didn't get it, surrounded Job. They were not a productive source of encouragement and comfort. Job made a decision to shift his thinking. He embraced a healthy and beneficial perspective by declaring, “For I know that my Redeemer lives.” Job acknowledged the sovereignty of God and the redeeming love of God.

How desperate is your situation? What has captivated your mind and dominated your emotions? What kind of season are you in currently? Declare by faith that your Redeemer lives. Articulate the reality of God's sovereignty and the certainty of God's redeeming love. God is for you. God knows where you are and what you are feeling right now. Your Redeemer lives. Run from your fear, anxiety, and anguish. Deliberately run to your Redeemer.

Look how far God has brought you. Calculate where you would be without His grace, His mercy, and His persistent pursuit. One day you will see God. One day you will stand before God to give an account for your life. Your Redeemer lives inside of you so that you can join Him in redeeming others.

Fully Devoted

“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.” Job 23:10-12 (ESV)

Job was fully devoted to God. Both in private and in public, Job was cognizant of the omniscience of God. Job recognized that God was all-knowing and all-seeing and that nothing escapes God’s attention. As a result, Job was conscientious about the paths he took, he was cautious about the decisions he made, and he was committed to the ways of God.

Your decisions determine your direction and ultimately your destination. The decisions you make each day have immediate and eternal implications. Therefore, your decision-making process is vital. Are you doing life God’s way? Are you making decisions based on God’s will or based on your own personal agenda.

Job did not make decisions in a vacuum. Job had a heightened awareness of God’s activity. In revering God, Job lived his life in view of God’s purpose and plan. He did not want to make a decision that would violate God’s nature and character. Job wanted to live his life consistent with God’s will.

God knows the way you take. When He has tried you, will you come out as gold? Hold fast to God’s steps. Keep His way and do not deviate from His path. Do not depart from His commandments.

Ask God to show you what you need to stop doing, what you need to continue doing, and what you need to start doing? Be a fully devoted follower of Christ and passionately pursue His will.

Maintain Integrity

“As God lives, who has taken away my right, and the Almighty, who has made my soul bitter, ³ as long as my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils, ⁴ my lips will not speak falsehood, and my tongue will not utter deceit. ⁵ Far be it from me to say that you are right; till I die I will not put away my integrity from me. ⁶ I hold fast my righteousness and will not let it go; my heart does not reproach me for any of my days.” Job 27:2-6 (ESV)

Your life is like a tube of toothpaste, when squeezed, whatever is on the inside will come out. Adversity has a way of squeezing out fears, frustrations, resentment, and bitterness. By nature, we suppress those things that disappoint us or hurt us. We seek to dodge pain.

Job experienced an intense season of testing that revealed what was on the inside of him. Job was honest about his disappointment and transparent about the resident bitterness within his soul. In spite of the avalanche of adversity, Job chose to maintain his integrity. He made a commitment to not speak falsehood, to not utter deceit, and to not put away his integrity. Job resolved to hold fast to his righteousness and not let it go.

Everybody looks good from a distance. What do you see when you get close enough to see what is on the inside? How are you doing internally? Maintain integrity by staying close to the Lord and clean before the Lord. Surrender to the Lordship of Christ and make sure that the tongue in your mouth lines up with the tongue in your shoe. Hold fast to the righteousness of Christ. You are positionally right before God in Christ. Apply that positional righteousness through practical righteous living.

Anguish and Affliction

“And now my soul is poured out within me; days of affliction have taken hold of me. ¹⁷ The night racks my bones, and the pain that gnaws me takes no rest.” Job 30:16-17 (ESV)

I don't know how much more I can take. Have you ever said that? Have you ever felt that way? Job became weary from his arduous journey with adversity. His soul was now in anguish and his days of affliction had gained more ground. Job's emotional stability had been capsized by the violent waves of pain. His image had been altered and his self-worth had been placed on the clearance rack. Job hit a low point.

Living in a world polluted by sin and infested with our fallen condition generates an environment far from paradise. We live on a broken planet that stems from the Fall of man. The earth is cursed and humanity combats the presence of sin, sickness, and sorrow. God redeems us from our sin and re-creates us to be like Christ so that we can be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. God allows us to remain on this broken planet to join Him in restoring fallen humanity. God entrusts us with the task of sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ. He is our hope, our peace, and our future.

God dispenses grace to match our need. When you spiral down into the depths of despair, God's grace is distributed in proportion to your deficit. The Apostle Paul advanced through adversity by accessing the grace God supplied. "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Cor 12:9 ESV).

God's Patience

"Behold, God does all these things, twice, three times, with a man,³⁰ to bring back his soul from the pit, that he may be lighted with the light of life." Job 33:29-30 (ESV)

Elihu had patiently sat and listened to Job and Job's three friends. Elihu was young and somewhat intimidated by these men. In his listening, Elihu burned with anger as he surmised that Job was righteous in his own eyes. His anger increased by his summation of Job's three friends because they had found no answer, yet they declared Job to be in the wrong. Then Elihu articulated profound insight into the patience of God. He affirmed that God is persistent in bringing back a man's soul from the pit so that he may be lighted with the light of life.

Consider God's patience in your life. Take a moment to examine your life and trace the decisions you have made over the years. How many times has God rescued you from the pit of poor choices? How many times has God patiently waited for your compliance to His will? We would have no hope for knowing and doing God's will without His abundant supply of grace and patience. "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" (2 Peter 3:9 ESV).

Allow God's patience to generate an attitude of gratitude in you as you join Him in His activity today. Enjoy being a recipient of God's patience and seek to emulate His patience as you interact with others. Make yourself available for God's use as He draws others to Christ through you. Be patient with others just as God has been patient with you.

Awesome Majesty

"And now no one looks on the light when it is bright in the skies, when the wind has passed and cleared them.²² Out of the north comes golden splendor; God is clothed with awesome majesty." Job 37:21-22 (ESV)

As Elihu spoke to Job, he declared the splendor and awesome majesty of God. In our humanity, we have limitations. Our Creator, God, has chosen to reveal Himself to us. In His holiness and righteousness, God made it possible for us to come into relationship with Him through the atoning work of Jesus on the cross. God has made Himself knowable and imparts to us the gift of eternal life.

- “Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹ obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.” 1 Peter 1:8-9 (ESV)
- “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.” 1 John 3:2 (ESV)

Consider the depth of what you currently know about God as a result of your personal relationship with Him through Christ. As you calculate the level of intimacy you enjoy with God, measure the reality of what is yet to come for those of us who know Him personally. One day we will have the awesome privilege to stand before God and obtain the full extent of the salvation of our souls. We will receive our glorified body and enjoy eternal life with God in heaven. We shall be like Him and see Him as He is.

Measure of a Moment

“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. ⁵Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it?” Job 38:4-5 (ESV)

There are times when God has to remind us that we are not God. When we fail to remember that God is the Creator and we are the created, we position ourselves for a lesson on humility. It is possible to get so busy doing life that you forget the reality of who God is and what He has done. During seasons of adversity, it is possible to become so self-absorbed that you ignore the reality of God’s abiding Presence.

God had to remind Job of his personal limitations and the shortfall of his humanity. Job made some shortsighted assumptions about God that did not line up with God’s nature and character. Job was speaking from his own limited understanding about life and the origin of life. God intervened by speaking to Job and engaging him with some thought provoking questions.

Just after graduating from college, I was asked to preach one of my closest friend's funeral. He died as a result of an aggressive form of cancer at age twenty-two. God placed the following passage of Scripture on my heart to share at Jimmy's funeral.

- “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” Isaiah 55:8-9 (ESV)

Are you having a difficult time making sense out of some of the things going on in your life right now? Acknowledge God's supremacy and His majesty. Entrust your life and your circumstances to His redemptive care. God fashioned you for His glory and He will accomplish His plan through you in the midst of your circumstances.

God's Will Prevails

“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.’” Job 42:1-2 (ESV)

The chisel of adversity and the hammer of suffering produced an informative perspective within Job to be able to declare that God can do all things. Job acknowledged the power of God and the firm reality of the prevailing purposes of God. Regardless of the trajectory of the circumstances and the momentum of the adversity, God will accomplish His plan.

God allowed Job to experience a journey filled with heartache, loss, grief, and anguish. Through it all, God navigated the path for Job to come to the place of desperation that ultimately led to the place of restoration.

- “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.” Job 42:10 (ESV)
- “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.” Job 42:12-13 (ESV)
- “And Job died, an old man, and full of days.” Job 42:17 (ESV)

What's your story? Maybe you have gone through an avalanche of adversity or the undulation of uncertainty. What have you learned about God's faithfulness? Have

you come to experience the prevailing purposes of God? God has the final say and He is working all things together for your good and for His glory (Rom. 8:28-29).

What needs restoration in your life? Where do you need to experience God's faithfulness the most? Draw near to Him and trust Him to see you through. God is still on His throne and nothing happens to you without His permission. If God allows it, He will use it to accomplish His purposes and plan. Rest in His providence.

POINTS FOR HOME

1. Draw near to God.

“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Hebrews 4:16 (ESV)

“And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.” Hebrews 11:6 (ESV)

“Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” James 4:8 (ESV)

2. Comfort others with the comfort you have received.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. ⁵ For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.” 2 Corinthians 1:3-5 (ESV)

3. Keep your eyes on the prize.

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12:1-2 (ESV)