

Keynotes from Tim Gamston's am Sermon on 19/6/2022

Text: Job 42 verses 1-9

Series: "Seeing God through suffering"

Part 11: "Seeing through suffering"

Scripture references from the ESV

Job 42: 1-9 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 in dust and ashes."

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. 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.

Suffering can either harden us or soften us towards God. Some people blame God and become hard and bitter. However, there are others who, despite great suffering, have come to a place where God is more real to them and they love him and submit to his will for them. These people have heard God speak into their suffering, and they have listened rightly and actively to God. Job had suffered greatly, and had felt abandoned by God. The worst of his suffering lay in God seeming absent and silent, when Job wanted him to draw near.

The darkness of suffering had veiled God's lovely face.

Yet towards the end of the book, we see that God meets him in his suffering so that he is able to say 'now my eye sees you' (v5 above). The pain and suffering have been God's means to bring Job to a greater knowledge of God, intensifying Job's longing for God. However, it needed more than suffering to bring Job to experience God.

Job needed to hear God speak to him and he needed to listen rightly to what God was saying.

Job already knew God (look back to **Job chs 1 and 2** in your Bible), but now he speaks of coming into

a deeper relationship with God than he had before his suffering.

God took the initiative to speak to Job and Job listened rightly to God. If we want a deeper relationship with God, we also need God to speak into our lives, which he does through his word (the Bible), and we also need to listen rightly.

- How have you listened to God as he has been speaking to you in his speech to Job?

In speaking to Job, God is speaking to us. He has asked questions that have shown him to be both

- sovereign over evil, Satan and death....and at the same time
- just, caring and loving

As God has been speaking, ask yourself if you have come to a place where you can say with Job:

I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you (v5)

We can listen and gain a knowledge of God. Job had a knowledge of God (hearing with his ears) that enabled him:

- To fear God and live in obedience to him
- To know that God was the creator of all things, and powerfully and sovereignly ruled over the universe
- To know that one day his body would be resurrected
- To know that he needed a redeemer and mediator and that sacrifice was essential to be right with God and to be able to approach him

However, there is a hearing that moves from knowledge **about** God to knowing God more deeply.

There is a listening that results in seeing.

Seeing is something we do with our eyes, yet it is clear that Job has not physically seen God. However now

God speaks and Job sees.

- This seeing is with the eyes of his heart, not with his physical eyes
- This seeing is with his understanding and makes God so real to him that he becomes a personal God

Head knowledge about God is turned into relational knowledge of God

What an encouragement for us who have not seen God with our physical eyes! We too are able to have this same

- seeing that leads us to know God personally
- seeing that brings us to eternal life
- seeing that brings us to know God as our Father, our Saviour and our comforter

How would we know if we really have had this experience of seeing God? A person who has encountered God will never be the same again. Job shows us three responses that demonstrate this radical change.

1. **Acknowledgment of God's glory (42:2 above).** God has spoken, showing Job and his friends the perfect wisdom in all that happens in the universe, his loving care for and sovereign power over his creation, and his just governance over evil, Satan and death. Job's response is a statement of praise, declaring the glory of God. He acknowledges God's right and power to do whatever he wishes in the universe.

Job had questioned God's justice and his right to rule the universe. His argument was that God had acted unjustly:

- God rules over the universe and therefore everything is under his control
- Sinful people deserve God's just judgement and good people deserve God's blessing
- Job had led a God-fearing life and therefore what he deserved is God's blessing
- Instead he received extreme suffering from God, and so to Job that meant God had acted unjustly.

As God reveals himself to Job through speech, showing him the complexity of running the universe and how his power and justice govern it with perfect wisdom, so **Job has been changed.**

He is no longer accusing God of injustice, but is submitting to God's sovereignty over his life. Through hearing God rightly, Job has come to a deeper knowledge of God. He

now knows that God is wise, just and caring, and he is willing to submit to God in praise. A real work of God in the heart shows when that person comes to delight in God and expresses that delight in praise, trust and submission, even when they don't understand what he is doing.

You will know that you are rightly seeing God when God is your delight

2. Confession of personal sin. Job falls silent when God confronts him (40:3-5 see p4), but God does not want silence. God wants Job's confession of sin, which comes in 42:3 above. Job, like many of us, thought he knew how to run the universe better than God.

In coming to see God, Job realised that the universe is far more complex than he could tell by his own observation. Things happen that we simply cannot understand because we don't see the big picture of the universe. We don't see

- how something we do today will affect someone in the future
- how every part of the universe is interconnected
- the whole history of the universe from the vantage point of eternity

God understands all of these matters and that is why he alone is perfectly qualified to govern the universe. Job has come to see this, and confesses to God that he spoke out of turn. We need a move of the Spirit so that we too can see.

When we come to really see God, we come into the light of his glory and that light exposes our failure to measure up to all that God is. We see that we have spoken wrongly about God to one another, and have thought and acted wrongly.

You will know that you are rightly seeing and delighting in God when, in the light of his glory,

you see your own sin and can confess your sin.

3. Repenting of self-righteousness. When our wrongdoing is exposed, we often try to justify ourselves, blaming our upbringing, denying what we have done or minimising its seriousness. Job had sought to justify himself before his friends, who had consistently told him that his suffering must mean that he had sinned in some way.

We know from the start of the book that, in God's eyes, Job was a blameless, God-fearing man. Yet he had come to a point where he was beginning to condemn God as unjust in order to prove his own blamelessness.

When he comes to really see God, he repents of that sin (42:5-6 above). When we try to defend ourselves, we put a barrier between ourselves and God. Job's only hope of enjoying God's favour was to surrender his grievance against him and to turn away from every attitude and action that led him to put himself above God.

- Job came to trust that his self-worth was in his relationship with God, not in his own moral behaviour or assumed innocence.

You will know that you are rightly seeing God when you can cease from trying to justify yourself before God and humbly accept that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only way by which you can be justified before God.

How does this seeing happen? How do we really come to know God?

There is a listening that leads to seeing, but what does it involve?

- a) **It involves rightly responding to God's word.** (42:3, 4-6 above). Job repeats what God says to him before he speaks to God. He is conversing with God in a meaningful way, pondering on what God has said to him and speaking back to God about the things God has said.

Job has actively listened to God and is showing this active listening by speaking back. When two beings engage in conversation, relationship is happening. That is how we come to know God personally, rather than just know about him.

You might know many facts about God, but if you never talk to God about what you know of him and what he reveals about himself, then you cannot claim to know God.

- We need to exercise faith, to believe that God exists and that he will be found by those who seek him.
- If God is speaking to you, take what he says and talk to him about it, without putting up barriers.

Head knowledge about God becomes relational knowledge of God through conversation with God

- b) **Listening that leads to seeing involves rightly responding to Jesus Christ.** Job came to a true assessment of himself before God, seeing himself as dust.

Many years later our glorious God wrapped himself in our dust, adding a human nature to his divine nature in a real body like ours. He lived a life of perfect obedience, died a sacrificial death on the cross and was raised to life so that we might be put right with God and enjoy this relationship with him.

The only way to come to God and know him is through the Lord Jesus Christ so that

- You acknowledge Christ's right to rule over you and come to delight in him as sovereign God
- As your sin is exposed in the light of his glory, you confess it to him
- In humility you trust in Jesus alone for your justification

If that describes you, then you can have assurance that you know this God and are rightly seeing him.

Yet there is so much more. Our God is eternal. We will never be able to exhaust him. He will keep us satisfied forever when all the things of the earth are stripped away and we come to see him face to face.

- Do **not** be satisfied with the level of knowledge of God that you currently have. Come further up and further in!

40:3-5 ³ 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.

C.S. Lewis – The Last Battle

It is as hard to explain how this sunlit land was different from the old Narnia as it would be to tell you how the fruits of that country taste. Perhaps you will get some idea of it if you think like this. You may have been in a room in which there was a window that looked out on a lovely bay of the sea or a green valley that wound away among mountains. And in the wall of that room opposite to the window there may have been a looking-glass. And as you turned away from the window you suddenly caught sight of that sea or that valley, all over again, in the looking glass. And the sea in the mirror, or the valley in the mirror, were in one sense just the same as the real ones: yet at the same time they were somehow different — deeper, more wonderful, more like places in

a story: in a story you have never heard but very much want to know. The difference between the old Narnia and the new Narnia was like that. The new one was a deeper country: every rock and flower and blade of grass looked as if it meant more. I can't describe it any better than that: if ever you get there you will know what I mean.

It was the Unicorn who summed up what everyone was feeling. He stamped his right fore-hoof on the ground and neighed, and then he cried: "I have come home at last! This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now. The reason why we loved the old Narnia is that it sometimes looked a little like this. Bree-hee-hee! *Come further up, come further in!*"