

Keynotes from Tim Gamston's am Sermon on 8/5/2022

Series: "Seeing God through Suffering"

Pt 7 "Faith rises in affliction"

Text: Job 12 v 13 and 13 verses 1-22

Scripture references from the ESV

Job 12:13, 13:1-22 "With God are wisdom and might; he has counsel and understanding. **13:1** Behold, my eye has seen all this, my ear has heard and understood it.² What you know, I also know; I am not inferior to you.³ But I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to argue my case with God.⁴ As for you, you whitewash with lies; worthless physicians are you all. ⁵ Oh that you would keep silent, and it would be your wisdom! ⁶ Hear now my argument and listen to the pleadings of my lips.⁷ Will you speak falsely for God and speak deceitfully for him? ⁸ Will you show partiality towards him? Will you plead the case for God? ⁹ Will it be well with you when he searches you out? Or can you deceive him, as one deceives a man?¹⁰ He will surely rebuke you if in secret you show partiality.¹¹ Will not his majesty terrify you, and the dread of him fall upon you?¹² Your maxims are proverbs of ashes; your defences are defences of clay.¹³ "Let me have silence, and I will speak, and let come on me what may.¹⁴ Why should I take my flesh in my teeth and put my life in my hand?¹⁵ Though he slay me, I will hope in him; yet I will argue my ways to his face.

¹⁶ This will be my salvation, that the godless shall not come before him. ¹⁷ Keep listening to my words, and let my declaration be in your ears.¹⁸ Behold, I have prepared my case; I know that I shall be in the right.¹⁹ Who is there who will contend with me? For then I would be silent and die.²⁰ Only grant me two things, then I will not hide myself from your face:²¹ withdraw your hand far from me, and let not dread of you terrify me.²² Then call, and I will answer; or let me speak, and you reply to me.

Faith is essential to our life with God

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**)

Without true faith in the God of the Bible, you cannot please God, glorify Christ or be eternally saved, but what happens when faith is under pressure? It is easy to trust God when everything is going well, but what about when:

- you have lost your financial security, your children have been taken from you, you are afflicted in your health and your friends have turned on you?
- you can't see the way forward and nothing makes sense to you?
- God seems absent, or if you do feel his presence, you are terrified because of the affliction he has brought on you?
- the course of action you need to take seems so risky that you are crippled by anxiety?

How can we trust God when it seems as if he is against us?

Job's answer to this question is: **Though he slay me, I will hope in him (13:15)**. Nothing externally has changed for Job, yet, remarkably, in the midst of this place of intense suffering, Job is able to make this statement of faith. That hope even leads him to say '**I will argue my ways to his (God's) face**' (13:15), yet previously we saw that Job was afraid to come before God (9:14-20, 32-34 see p4).

How has Job come to this place of faith, and how can we do the same when we feel everything is against us?

1. **The foundation of faith (12:13ff see p4)**. These verses are **a hymn of praise to God**, and teach us a truth about God that, rightly understood, is the bedrock of Christian faith.
 - When you wonder if God is truly in control, read these verses and turn them into prayer.

Job is celebrating the sovereignty and power of God. He shows us a:

- God who sovereignly rules over the natural world (12:15 see p4)
- God who sovereignly rules over all humans regardless of their status (12:16-21 see p4)
- God who sovereignly rules over all nations (12:23 see p4)

Job is celebrating God's might as a king who is unrivalled by anyone or anything in all creation. Ask yourself if this is how you see God? Is this the God you worship, and how does it make you feel when you contemplate a God who has absolute sovereign power over everything:

- From galaxies to governments

- The poor and the rich, the wise and the foolish
- Floods, tsunamis, earthquakes and volcanoes
- Every beast on the earth, every bird in the sky and every sea creature in the waters

Our own lives are under the hand of this sovereign God who reigns unrivalled. This would be a terrifying thought were it not for who God is. Job reminds us that

God is not just a God of might but also a God of wisdom (12:13,16 see p4)

Job knows that God is mighty in his sovereign power over everything he has created, but he also knows that God is wise (skilled) in running the universe and our lives. When you have a God who is both wise and mighty, who always knows the right thing to do and has the power to do what is right then

you have a God you can trust.

Job is not putting his trust in what God has done.

- Job is taking what he knows about God and is putting his trust in God because of his character.

Faith rests on who God is not on what he has done

- Job does not understand what God is doing and is certain that his friends don't understand either.

It is enough for Job that God knows what he is doing

- To have the kind of faith that perseveres under trial

You need to truly know this sovereign God of wisdom and power

Our faith is weak because we don't spend time meditating on the character of God as he is revealed to us in the Bible, and supremely in Jesus Christ. When we are confronted with this God as he is seen in Jesus, we see a God

- who has power over nature, demons and humans and whose wisdom silences the greatest minds of his day
- yet who is filled with compassion, grace and love for those who humble themselves and come to him

In Christ, we see a God who uses his wisdom and power for the good of his people.

When we know God as the sovereign God who is mighty and wise then

even though we may not understand what he is doing, we can still trust him.

2. The result of faith. Faith in God is always active (**James 2:17** see p4).

Job's trust in God leads him to take action by confronting his friends. He rebukes them for the way they have spoken about him, and more importantly about God. (**13:2 -12** above). He warns them that God will judge them for what they have said. Job's trust in God now leads him to speak to God. (**v18** ff above). Earlier, he was terrified to come to God to argue his case (**9:14-20** see p4) but now he is willing to take his life in his hands and approach this holy God before whom the godless cannot come (**v14-16** above).

In this statement, Job tells us that he knows God, in his holiness, will consume godless people who came before him. However, he (Job) has confidence that won't happen to him because he is blameless. God will justify him and show that his suffering is not because of sin. **Yet even if God slays him, Job will still hope in him.** Job's faith will continue to be tested, leading him to despair again (Read **ch 17** in your Bible) but here he demonstrates amazing faith.

True faith in the character of God gives us confidence to come to God, even though we know sinners cannot stand in this presence.

3. The hero of faith. How can sinners stand in the presence of God and be justified? Job did not have a complete revelation of all that God was going to do, but he did know that he needed a mediator between himself and God. (**9:33** see p4).

Job was longing for Jesus

Later, Job does present his questions to God and **God does not slay him**. Job is right to say **the godless shall not come before him (God)** (**v16** above). Though Job is blameless, he is not sinless. Though he turns away from his sin and fears God, he still needs someone to put right the sins he has committed. His sins carry the death penalty and God should slay him. If he is not slain, then someone else must be in order to satisfy God's justice.

That someone is Jesus. Though he is the only one who perfectly trusted his Father, with a faith unlike any other human being, Jesus was slain so that Job and all who trust in Jesus are justified before God and are not slain when we come into his presence.

It is Jesus who gives us faith and grows our faith. (**Hebrews 12:2** see p4).

- Jesus perfectly trusted his Father and when we look to him, he speaks his word into our lives and by his Spirit, gives us faith to trust him
- Jesus was slain on the cross and when we look to him, he takes away our sin and gives us his own righteousness
- Jesus is seated at the right hand of God and when we look to him, we too are lifted up to sit with Christ in heavenly places.

Satan's accusation against Job was '**Does Job fear God for no reason?**' (1:9). Job has come to a place where he has proved Satan wrong. Even if God slays Job, Job will still trust and fear God. What can we learn from this?

a) Faith trusts in the wisdom of God even when we don't understand what he is doing. (Job 23:8-10)

God governs our lives with his perfect wisdom. Even when we don't understand what he is doing, faith rests in the character of God, knowing that he is too wise to make a mistake, too good to be unkind, and too powerful to be frustrated. Faith looks above the circumstances to the God in control of the circumstances.

b) Faith trusts in the power of God to act in the hopeless situations we face.

Is there something you are facing (like Job) that is so out of your control that you cannot see how it can ever change? Perhaps you have health issues, children who are spiritually dead, money troubles or you have been wrongly judged by friends. God is able to change things, but even if he doesn't change them this side of eternity, we can still trust him because he has promised us a world to come where everything will be put right.

c) Faith trusts in the eternal Son of God to redeem us from sin and give us eternal life.

Even if God slays him, Job says he will still hope in him yet how can he trust God if he is dead? Job's answer is found in **19:25-27** (see p4). We have a redeemer who justifies us in God's presence and secures for us eternal life so that, even after we have died, we can still enjoy God.

Job was not just a Bible character or some sort of superhuman – he was a human being like us. Other people have since suffered great tragedy. One example is Horatio Spafford (see p5). He lost all his wealth and later his four daughters were drowned in a shipping accident. Following on from this, he wrote a hymn which spoke of his faith in Christ, despite the grievous pathway his Saviour had called him to take. (Words on p4.) The hymn is entitled:

It is well with my soul

Job 9:14-20 How then can I answer him, choosing my words with him?¹⁵ Though I am in the right, I cannot answer him; I must appeal for mercy to my accuser.¹⁶ If I summoned him and he answered me, I would not believe that he was listening to my voice.¹⁷ For he crushes me with a tempest and multiplies my wounds without cause;¹⁸ he will not let me get my breath, but fills me with bitterness.¹⁹ If it is a contest of strength, behold, he is mighty! If it is a matter of justice, who can summon him?²⁰ Though I am in the right, my own mouth would condemn me; though I am blameless, he would prove me perverse.

Job 9:32-34 For he is not a man, as I am, that I might answer him, that we should come to trial together.³³ There is no ^[d] arbiter between us, who might lay his hand on us both.³⁴ Let him take his rod away from me, and let not dread of him terrify me.

Job 12:13 – 25 With God^[d] are wisdom and might; he has counsel and understanding.¹⁴ If he tears down, none can rebuild; if he shuts a man in, none can open.¹⁵ If he withholds the waters, they dry up; if he sends them out, they overwhelm the land.¹⁶ With him are strength and sound wisdom; the deceived and the deceiver are his.¹⁷ He leads counsellors away stripped, and judges he makes fools.¹⁸ He looses the bonds of kings and binds a waistcloth on their hips.¹⁹ He leads priests away stripped and overthrows the mighty.²⁰ He deprives of speech those who are trusted and takes away the discernment of the elders.²¹ He pours contempt on princes and loosens the belt of the strong.²² He uncovers the deeps out of darkness and brings deep darkness to light.²³ He makes nations great, and he destroys them; he enlarges nations, and leads them away.²⁴ He takes away understanding from the chiefs of the people of the earth and makes them wander in a pathless waste.²⁵ They grope in the dark without light, and he makes them stagger like a drunken man.

James 2:17 So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

Hebrews 12:2 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.

Job 19:25-27 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 ^[c] my flesh I shall see God, ²⁷ whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.

It is well with my soul

Verse 1: When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll

Whatever my lot Thou hast taught me to say 'It is well It is well with my soul'

Verse 2: Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come, let this blest
assurance control

That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate and hath shed His own blood for my
soul

Verse 3 My sin O - the bliss of this glorious thought –

my sin - not in part but the whole - is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more

Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord O my soul

Verse 4 For me be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live, if Jordan above me shall roll
No pang shall be mine for in death as in life, you will whisper your peace to my soul

Verse 5 But, Lord, 'tis for Thee, for Thy coming we wait, the sky, not the grave, is our
goal!

Oh trump of the angel! Oh voice of the Lord! Blessed hope, blessed rest of my soul!

It is well with my soul

It is well

It is well with my soul

Please see p5 for the full story of the Spafford family.

The Story of the "It is well with my soul"

Horatio Gates Spafford was born in New York, on 20th October 1828, but it was in Chicago that he became well-known for his clear Christian testimony. He and his wife Anna were active in their church, and their home was always open to visitors. They counted the world-famous evangelist, Dwight L. Moody, among their friends. They

were blest with five children and considerable wealth. Horatio was a lawyer and owned a great deal of property in his home city.

Not unlike Job in the Old Testament of the Bible, tragedy came in great measure to this happy home. When four years old, their son, Horatio Jnr, died suddenly of scarlet fever. Then only a year later, in October 1871, a massive fire swept through downtown Chicago, devastating the city, including many properties owned by Horatio. That day, almost 300 people lost their lives, and around 100,000 were made homeless. Despite their own substantial financial loss, the Spaffords sought to demonstrate the love of Christ, by assisting those who were grief-stricken and in great need.

Two years later, in 1873, Spafford decided his family should take a holiday in England, knowing that his friend, the evangelist D. L. Moody, would be preaching there in the autumn. Horatio was delayed because of business, so he sent his family ahead: his wife and their four remaining children, all daughters, 11 year old Anna, 9 year old Margaret Lee, 5 year old Elizabeth, and 2 year old Tanetta.

Another Tragedy

On 22nd November 1873, while crossing the Atlantic on the steamship, Ville du Havre, their vessel was struck by an iron sailing ship. Two hundred and twenty-six people lost their lives, as the Ville du Havre sank within only twelve minutes.

All four of Horatio Spafford's daughters perished, but remarkably Anna Spafford survived the tragedy. Those rescued, including Anna, who was found unconscious, floating on a plank of wood, subsequently arrived in Cardiff, South Wales. Upon arrival there, Anna immediately sent a telegram to her husband, which included the words "Saved alone...."

Receiving Anna's message, he set off at once to be reunited with his wife. One particular day, during the voyage, the captain summoned him to the bridge of the vessel. Pointing to his charts, he explained that they were then passing over the very spot where the Ville du Havre had sunk, and where his daughters had died. It is said that Spafford returned to his cabin and wrote the hymn "It is well with my soul" there and then, the first line of which is, "When peace like a river, attendeth my way.." Horatio's faith in God never faltered. He later wrote to Anna's half-sister, "On Thursday last, we passed over the spot where she went down, in mid-ocean, the waters three miles deep. But I do not think of our dear ones there. They are safe..... dear lambs".

After Anna was rescued, Pastor Nathaniel Weiss, one of the ministers traveling with the surviving group, remembered hearing Anna say, "God gave me four daughters. Now they have been taken from me. Someday I will understand why."

Naturally, Anna was utterly devastated, but she testified that in her grief and despair, she had been conscious of a soft voice speaking to her, "You were saved for a

purpose!" She remembered something a friend had once said, "It's easy to be grateful and good when you have so much, but take care that you are not a fair-weather friend to God."

Following this deep tragedy, Anna gave birth to three more children, but she and Horatio were not spared even more sadness, as on February 11th, 1880, their only son, Horatio (named after the brother who had died, and also after his father), he also died at the age of four.

Further Service

In August 1881 the Spaffords left America with a number of other like-minded Christians and settled in Jerusalem. There they served the needy, helped the poor, and cared for the sick, and took in homeless children. Their desire was to show those living about them, the love of Jesus.

Horatio Spafford died of malaria on 16th October 1888. Anna Spafford continued to work in the surrounding areas of Jerusalem until her own death in 1923. Both Horatio and Anna were laid to rest in Jerusalem. It can truly be said, in the words that Spafford penned that, **"It is well with their souls."**

The question remains, is it so with yours?