

Keynotes from Tim Gamston's am Sermon on 13/03/2022

Series in Job: "Seeing God through suffering" Part 2:

"A cosmic conflict" Text: Job 1 v 6-12

Scripture references from the ESV

Job 1:6-1:12 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan^[b] also came among them. 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." ⁸ And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?" ⁹ Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason? ¹⁰ Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹ But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face." 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." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD. **See p4 for rest of reading**

Throughout the Bible, one very significant question recurs. That question is:

Will you trust God?

Will you trust him with all the aspects of your temporal life, and with your eternal soul?

The Bible is a revelation of God, his autobiography in fact, and he chooses to tell his story through the lives of real people. God reveals himself through the way he relates to human beings, because he is a God who wants to be known and trusted. The Bible shows us that God exists and always has. It shows us what he is like so that we can come to know and trust him. As we read it, the question we have to ask ourselves is:

Will we trust him?

When everything is going well for us, it is easy to answer yes! When our life falls apart, and terrible things happen to us and in the world, will we still trust God in those times? Will we love him, fear, him and obey him?

Will God be glorified in our lives when significant sorrow hits us?

When we first met Job, his life was idyllic, but there came a day when everything changed for Job (and we will all have this experience at some time) and his world

collapsed. He lost everything except his life. He buried all his children in one day, and on that same day, all his wealth was taken away. A short time later, he lost his health too. He was plunged into the deepest grief imaginable, so that he wished his life would come to an end, or that he had never been born. Remarkably, he continued to fear God and to trust him even in his darkest moments.

We get to see the back story behind Job's suffering, though Job knew nothing of it. We witness the conversation in heaven between God and Satan, a conversation that teaches us three truths about God which will enable us to trust him even when our life is turned upside down. It is a conversation that will assure us that

The God who loves us is master of our significant sorrows

We can see three reasons here to have confidence that we can trust God and that he will not let us down.

1. **God's concern for his own reputation (v6 above).** The name Satan means enemy, and we need to be in no doubt that he exists as a real being, not just as a metaphor for evil in the world. He was one of God's created angels, but he rebelled against God, wanting to take over his throne. He has at his disposal an army of fallen angels called demons, whom he deceived and who followed him into rebellion against their creator. He is bitterly opposed to God and his people as this conversation shows.

- The Bible teaches that there is a cosmic conflict between good and evil, God and Satan, but God is sovereign and he wins.

When Satan comes into the heavenly council meeting, God asks him where he has come from. Unlike God, who is omnipresent, Satan cannot be everywhere at the same time, but he appears to have been wandering the earth looking for godly people who he can attack. God singles out Job (v8) as being **the** godly man on earth, a man in whom he delights and even calls his servant. Satan replies with accusations (v9).

- He accuses Job of only loving, fearing and obeying God because of all that God has given him. If it is all taken from him, Satan says Job will curse God.

- Though he is discrediting Job, Satan's accusations are ultimately aimed towards the character of God. He is saying that God is not worthy of Job's loyalty.

At stake in this cosmic contest is the glory of God.

The question Satan raises is this. Will a man (in this case Job) fear God, love him and obey him

- for who he is, purely because he is worthy of reverence, love and obedience
- or
- only because he gives him good things

The only way to find out is to allow Satan to afflict Job. The lesson here flies in the face of our contemporary culture, which makes everything, even our Christian faith, all about 'me', as if I am the centre of the world. The lesson is that

God is concerned more about his own glory than he is for our comfort

We may find that troubling, but when we understand what it means, it actually becomes a source of great comfort.

Because God is concerned for his own glory, he won't ultimately allow evil to triumph

- 2. God's absolute authority over evil.** Who is in ultimate control of what happens in the world – humans, Satan or God? Clearly, Job is not in control over what happens to him. If he was in control of his own life, he would not have inflicted on himself what he suffered. Job could make plans, but he could not be sure they would work out as he wanted them to. (**James 4:13-15** see p4).

Is Satan in ultimate control, then? He does have control over things that happen in the world. When God sends him out, Satan has influence over the evil men, natural disasters and disease that afflict Job. We see this truth in the gospels too. (**Luke 22:3, Mark 4:35-41, Luke 13:16** see p4). He is described as the 'ruler of this world' (**John 12:31**). We need to be careful we do not give him a foothold. Job could have said 'Satan has afflicted me', and in one sense that would have been true. Instead, he says: **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 1:21**) and **'Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?'** (**Job 2:10**). We know he is right to say this, because we are told twice that Job did not sin with his lips (**1:22, 2:10**). This

leaves us with the uncomfortable and challenging truth that, although Satan can exercise significant authority in the earth, he doesn't have ultimate authority.

- His is a delegated authority, and the authority is delegated by God.

In the conversation between God and Satan, it is God who has the first and last word.

- Satan doesn't speak until God asks him a question, and says nothing once God has told him what he can do.
- It is God who gives Satan authority to attack Job. He cannot do it unless God allows it.
- He can go no further in his attack on Job than God permits (1:12, 2:6). God has the final word on Job's life.
- Satan is under the sovereign control of God and can only do what God allows.

This might cause you to feel deeply uncomfortable and conflicted. You might question who this God is who allows Satan to so afflict God's loyal servant, Job.

However, who would you rather have in ultimate control of your life and this world?

Would you prefer:

- To have your life at the mercy of an unconstrained Satan, who hates you?
- **Or** to be under the sovereign control of God, who loves you, and is all good and wise?

Those are the only choices. You would surely prefer to know that

Your life is in the hands of the God who is all good, all wise and who loves you; the God who will always have the victory over evil, turning it round for your good and his glory.

- 3. God's decisive victory over Satan.** Satan has made an attack on the glory of God, which God will not let him get away with. Satan's authority has been shown to be an authority delegated by God, so that we can have the assurance that God is sovereign. God's glory and God's sovereignty mean Satan's defeat.

Satan was wrong about Job's response to his afflictions. Job was stripped of everything that God had given him, yet he does not curse God to his face. Satan was defeated in this contest because God's grace was operating in Job's life.

God is glorified in the life of Job as being worthy of fear, love and obedience purely for who he is. Everything is taken away from Job, but he still fears God, loves God and obeys God because God is worthy.

After this, Satan no longer appears in the book of Job. He is defeated by God, who is working through Job.

Satan may be a formidable enemy but he is a defeated enemy.

The greatest defeat happened 2000 years ago when the Lord Jesus Christ, God incarnate, in whom God delights and calls his servant, suffered under the weight of the sin of the world so that the world might have forgiveness, putting the glory of God on display.

Hebrews 2:14-15 (see p4) tells us what was going on. God's commitment to his own reputation means that he is not willing to allow evil to ultimately triumph. The one hold that Satan had over us was our sin and the fear of death that sin brings. God became a human like us, though sinless, so that he might defeat Satan's power over us. To do that Jesus had to take our sin on himself and die our death, suffering far more than Job did or we ever will. Through his death he made atonement for our sin, and through his resurrection he cut a way through death so that sin and death no longer have any hold over those who trust in him. In the cross of Christ, we see **God's love, goodness and wisdom.**

This is the God who is THE master over our significant sorrows

Satan can, and still does, afflict us by using evil people, natural disasters and disease, but he can

- Never make any accusation stick against us because in Christ we are justified, declared righteous,
- Never separate us from God's love because in Christ we are loved eternally
- Never ultimately destroy us because in Christ we have the victory over him.

His worst attack against us will always be God's best for us, and we can be sure that God will be glorified in it because

The God who loves us is master over our significant sorrow

So surely now you have the answer to whether you can trust God. He is the God who:

- Is so committed to his own reputation that he will not allow evil to ultimately triumph, and will bring evil to an end even though this has to be done through his own suffering
- Has absolute authority over every created thing and therefore reigns sovereign over Satan
- Has defeated Satan so that his accusations cannot stick against us, and will one day put Satan in a place where he will never again disrupt this world.

**When we know that the God who is committed to his own glory,
who has sovereign power over all evil and has defeated our enemy is also
our God who loves us enough to die for us, then we can trust him with our earthly life
and our eternal soul.**

Job 1:13-2:10 Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, ¹⁴ and there came a messenger to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, ¹⁵ and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them and struck down the servants^[c] with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you." ¹⁶ While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you." ¹⁷ While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "The Chaldeans formed three groups and made a raid on the camels and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you." ¹⁸ While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, ¹⁹ and behold, a great wind came across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead, and I alone have escaped to tell you."

²⁰ Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. ²¹ And 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."²² In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.

2 ¹ Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD. ² And 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." ³ And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason." ⁴ Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. ⁵ But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he

will curse you to your face.”⁶ And the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life.”

⁷ 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.

⁹ Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die.”

¹⁰ But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?”^[a] In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

James 4:13-15 Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”—¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.”

Luke 22:3 Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve

Mark 4:35-41 On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side.”³⁶ And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. ³⁷ And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. ³⁸ But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” ³⁹ And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰ He said to them, “Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?” ⁴¹ And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

Luke 13:16 And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?”

Hebrews 2:14-15 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.