

Keynotes from Tim Gamston's am Sermon on 26/6/2022

Text: Job 42 verses 1-9

Series: "Seeing God through suffering"

Part 12: "The outworking of grace"

Scripture references from the ESV

James 5:11 ¹¹ Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

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^[a] 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.

NB See p4 for the full readings.

Why have we given so much time to the study of this book of the Bible about a man who lived around 4000 years ago, in a land far away and a culture very different to ours? Job suffered terribly but what does that have to do with us? The book of James gives us an answer. James is a letter with a message from Jesus for Christians in every age as we live in this world that is under a curse. Jesus wants us to remain steadfast in our suffering and

**Job is an example to us both of steadfastness
and of the purposes of God. (James 5:11 above)**

How can we remain steadfast in our suffering? If we want to know what steadfastness is like, how it is achieved and what its fruit is in our lives, then we need to consider the steadfastness of Job, looking at three aspects of steadfastness.

1. **The definition of steadfastness.** We tend to think of steadfastness as the attitude of mind that says 'I'm just going to keep going, despite how hard it is.' That is the sort of attitude that enables us to climb to the top of a mountain no matter how much it makes our body ache!

Job's steadfastness, that same steadfastness that Jesus commands through James, is a different matter. At the start of the book, we discovered that a battle is taking place in the spiritual world between God and Satan, a battle which is played out on earth. However, Satan is under the sovereign control of God, and can only do what God permits. He is a being who has been defeated by Christ but despite this the battle still rages. Job is drawn into the battle, not because he has sinned, but because he believes in and fears the eternal God.

God has held Job up as the model believer, but Satan, in all his hatred of God, cannot allow that someone would fear God or love God just for who he is. He lays the following accusations against God and Job:

- Job only fears God because of what God has given him and is only following God because he gets good things
- If God takes the good things away from him then he will curse God to his face and God will see that Job doesn't fear and love him just for who he is.

What does it mean to curse God? It is to turn away from God and to live life without seeking him and finding our delight and comfort in him. The question is what will Job do when he loses everything that God has given him? Will he still love God? As we have walked with Job through his suffering we have seen him:

- despair of life and lament the day of his birth
- say wrong things about God, out of the anguish of his mind, causing him to have to repent

However, we have not seen him curse God

The opposite has been true. After he loses his family and his wealth, Job declares:
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. (1:21)

When his wife suggested he should curse God and die, he responded: **Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil? (Job 2:10)**

All through this deep agony, rather than turning away from God, Job has turned toward God. These statements show that Job wants God more than he wants anything else.

That shows us what steadfastness in suffering is. We know God could stop the suffering but he doesn't. Despite this we do not turn away from God. We turn toward him and we cry out to him. As believers, we are called to have

a steadfastness that doesn't give up on God.

Despite struggles with sin, doubts, illness, grief, debt, hostility, loss of blessing, and anguish of soul, we say:

Yet I will go to God my exceeding joy.

2. The heart of steadfastness. (Job 42:7-9 above). What is the secret of this kind of steadfastness? God has shown Job his glory as the God who is just, caring and sovereign over evil, Satan and death. As a result, Job has come to a deeper knowledge of God. (v5 above).

Now God speaks to Job's friends. They may have thought that God would commend them for speaking up for him, since Job has been rebuked by God and has had to confess and repent of his wrong. Instead, surprisingly, God rebukes the three friends because they had not spoken of God what is right (v7 above). The rebuke is so severe, as God's anger burns against them, that the men are in danger of hell.

Even more surprising is what God says about Job. Twice, he says that Job has spoken rightly about him, but we know what Job has said about God and it has not been right. Job has had to confess that he has said things he should not have done. How then can what God says be true?

This statement of God has to do not only with what Job says but who Job is (Christopher Ash see p4)

God looks on the heart, examining the motives behind the things we do and say. God is comparing the heart of Job's friends to Job's heart. Job's friends have a theological system but no relationship with God. Not once in all their speeches do they express a

longing for God. They do not pray or yearn for fellowship with him. They have invented a religious system and are content with that but that system and their doctrine does not drive them to know God.

In contrast, Job says 'Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat' (Job 23:3).

Job never loses his heart longing for God.

Job's friends had a static system of religion and considered that they had no need to join with Job in pleading for God to come. They would not have been at the church prayer meeting! Job would have been there, despite all that he was going through. Job so longed for God that he would have been pouring out his heart in a way that might make us feel uncomfortable. His words might be wrong at times, but his heart was right.

Job's friends want a system but Job wants God

This is the difference between religion and relationship.

- Religion claims to honour God, or the gods of its own making, The most important thing is to maintain the system by keeping the traditions, but the system is lifeless because there is no longing of the heart for God.

Religion like that is sinful. God's anger burned against Job's friends because they didn't long for God, just as his anger burns against dead religion that never leads to a longing for God.

Job continually longed for God and that longing was the secret of his steadfastness. His heart had been changed by God's grace to be a heart that longed for and loved God even when God had taken everything away from him.

Dead religion will never enable you to persevere under trial.

Only a heart that has been changed by God's grace and that longs for God will enable you to remain steadfast.

We can apply this to an area that we often fail to recognise as suffering. That area is the sin in our lives. Even when we are true believers, we still sin against God. Our suffering comes from knowing that we have grieved the God we love.

- If your sin does not grieve you in this way, then you do not know God.

Sin matters and obedience is important. We should be progressing in Christlikeness and holiness in our lives but what matters most is where we turn to in our sin.

If we turn to our religious systems, putting accountability in place, beating ourselves up with guilt and determining to do better, then we are like Job's friends. These things are not necessarily wrong but they do not work.

The believer who remains steadfast even when they sin is the believer who continually turns to Christ, not just for forgiveness but for grace to live right.

Jesus is not just the friend who walks beside us. He is to be at the centre of our life. A disciple is one who has Jesus, their God, at the very centre of their life so that everything they do is dictated by Christ and is for Christ. In every decision and in every struggle, they look to Christ for help, and they choose to go the way he calls them to go, rather than acting according to their own desires.

- Do you have religion or do you have the eternal son of God?
- Are you more concerned that the rules of your religion are being kept or are you concerned to be pursuing God with all your heart mind, soul and strength?
- Do you love the system you grew up in or do you love the God of the Bible?

Not only does your eternal destiny hang on this, but so also does your usefulness.

3. The fruit of steadfastness. Because Job was steadfast, maintaining his hope in God and longing for him with his whole heart, **Job could be used by God to see his friends saved (vv7-9 above)**. Job, a man commended by God, who has been sinned against by his friends, offers a sacrifice for them and prays for God to have mercy on them.

That is grace, and we see it displayed in all its fulness in the life of Jesus Christ.

- Betrayed, beaten, scorned and put to death on the cross, Jesus, the only truly righteous man, was rejected by those he came to save. He prayed to his Father to forgive them, as he offered himself as a sacrifice for their sin.

Forty days later, when Peter preached to those who had done this to Jesus, the people were convicted of their sin of rejecting God. With transformed hearts, they turned to Jesus for forgiveness, and Jesus forgave them. With their sin confessed, they were and are able to enjoy an eternal living relationship with him.

We do not have to be like Job's friends. If religion is what is important to you, you will turn on those who

do not follow your system.

When you turn to Jesus and confess your sin, believing that he died to save you, you too can enjoy a living steadfast relationship with Christ. You will find that his life in your soul will enable you to do amazing acts of grace. You too will be able to pray for your enemies. Only Christ in you by his Spirit will enable you to do this.

When Christ is precious to us, when he is the longing of our heart, when we are resting in him every day and trusting in his grace, then we will act like Jesus towards one another, with grace and compassion.

James 5:7-11 Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. ⁸ You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. ⁹ Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. ¹⁰ As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

Job 42:10-17 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. ¹¹ Then came to him all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before, and ate bread with him in his house. And they showed him sympathy and comforted him for all the evil^[b] that the LORD had brought upon him. And each of them gave him a piece of money^[c] and a ring of gold.

¹² 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. ¹⁴ And he called the name of the first daughter Jemimah, and the name of the second Keziah, and the name of the third Keren-happuch. ¹⁵ And in all the land there were no women so beautiful as Job's daughters. And their father gave them an inheritance among their brothers. ¹⁶ And after this Job lived for 140 years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, four generations. ¹⁷ And Job died, an old man, and full of days.

Christopher Ash – Job: the wisdom of the Cross Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014.