

GOD'S FRIEND JOB

Enduring Unexplained Suffering Faithfully

“A Journey through James”

Sermon 20

Texts: James 5:11; Job 1:6-12, 21-22; 2:10; 13:15; 23:10; 42:10-16

James 5:11 *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 1:6–12 *Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan 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.*

Job 1:21–22 *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.*

Job 2:10 *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?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips.*

Job 13:15 *Though he slay me, I will hope in him; yet I will argue my ways to his face.*

Job 23:10 *But he knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold.*

Job 42:10–16 *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 that the LORD had brought upon him. And each of them gave him a piece of money 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 140 years, and saw his sons, and his sons’ sons, four generations.*

Introduction:

For most of us, this has been a sobering week as we reflect on two events that have impacted and disrupted the lives of millions of people around the globe.

- One of those events took place twenty-two years ago today when a coordinated terrorist attack toppled two towers and brought permanent disruption to the way most of us do life in our country.
- The second of those events took place on Thursday of this week when the entire British Commonwealth was saddened by the news of the passing of the longest reigning monarch in British history, Queen Elizabeth the II. Most of her subjects were born during her 70-year reign meaning that she was foundational to the way life happened in the empire of which they were citizens.

Some of you experienced your own personal moments of unexpected disruption and personal pain – the loss of a beloved mother. The ongoing grief of the pain of lost opportunity. The disquieting news of an unanticipated medical diagnosis. The uncertainty of a financial reversal.

All of which may have left you reeling, trying to maintain spiritual equilibrium as you seek to make sense of what God has allowed that you would rather not have experienced and that you don't quite know how to process.

These are the very kinds of moments that James has in mind when he comes alongside to encourage us to “put iron in our hearts” as we faithfully persevere in our mission to display the powerful beauty of a whole-hearted, single-focused, fully trusting faith in our own personal hard place and dark space.

And to help us know what this looks like, he introduces us to five important friends of God who model what a living faith looks like under pressure. We have already met three of them in our journey through this marvelous epistle:

1. Abraham – shows us that living faith renders unquestioning obedience to God in the hardest places in life.
2. Rahab – shows us that living faith displays radical loyalty to God in all the spaces of our life.
3. The Prophets – show us that living faith speaks graciously and boldly for God regardless of the personal cost to our life.

This morning we meet Job, the fourth friend James introduces into his letter to help us learn that ***our living faith must faithfully endure prolonged pain and unexplained suffering unwaveringly.***

So, let's begin where James begins – with a strong exhortation which, if we will embrace, will enable us to do in our lives what Job did in his.

I. The Exhortation (5:7-8)

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.

A. Persevere Graciously Until the Lord Returns (5:7)

Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord.

B. Establish Your Hearts By the Promise of His Soon Return (5:8)

Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

Note the connection to the “coming of the Lord” in glory!

II. The Motivation (5:11a)

Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast.

A. The important reminder – “behold”

- Call to mind; think carefully about this; count as true!

B. What we are to remember – “we consider”

- We consider certain people approved by God and/or worthy of the honor and praise of God’s people.

C. These approved people are those who have “remained steadfast” throughout their lives

- They were steadfast under extreme pressure, painful circumstances, personal opposition, and ruthless persecution.
- Hebrews 11 gives us biblical examples of these kinds of people and reminds us that their faithful endurance under pressure and gracious perseverance in the face of ruthless persecution won for them “*Divine Approval and Commendation*” (Heb 11:2, 39) from God Who *was not ashamed to be known as their God* (11:16).

However, there is one example of remaining steadfast under pressure more than all the others and it is Job.

III. The Illustration (5:11b)

You have heard of the steadfastness of Job

A. The Orchestration of Job’s Suffering

- Divine Approval of the Righteous Servant (Job 1:1,8)
 - His Reputation before Men:** *There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil. (Job 1:1)*
 - His commendation by God:** *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?” (Job 1:8)*
- Divine Design of the Unexplained Suffering (Job 1:8; 2:3)
 - Orchestrated by God:** *“Have you considered my servant Job (1:8; 2:3)*
 - Boundaried by God:** *“Behold, all that he has in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand” (1:8); “Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life (2:6).*
 - Carried out by Satanic Attack:** *So Satan went out ... (1:12; 2:7)*
- Divine Display before an Unseen Heavenly Audience
 - Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them (Job 1:6; 2:1).*

B. The Nature of Job's Suffering

- Ruthless Accusations by Satan (Job 1:9-11)

*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.**"*

- Relentless Attack from Satan (Job 1:13-22; 2:7-10)

-on Job's possessions: oxen, sheep, camels, servants

-on Job's people: all your sons and daughters perished

-on Job's person: Loathsome sores and boils

-on Job's integrity: "Do you still hold onto your integrity? Curse God and die!"

-On Job's testimony: Listen to Elihu, the fourth friend who burns with indignation at Job's three friends because, although they could find no fault or answer, they had declared Job to be in the wrong (Job 32:3).

C. The Unfolding of Job's Suffering

- Job comes under ***unseen, unforeseen, and unexplained*** Satanic attack in every venue of his life.
- These spiritual assaults are relentless and come wave after wave against Job and are ***designed to beat him down and wear him out to the point that he will renounce his faith in the goodness of his God.***
- By the time we get to the halfway point – ***Job is all alone.***
 - His friends*** have accused him of hidden sin;
 - His wife*** has challenged him to stop defending the goodness of a God who would bring this kind of pain and suffering on them – especially after a lifetime of faithful, willing, glad obedience.
 - His God*** is silent and appears to be absent from the picture.

D. The Faith-filled Responses of Job in the midst of Suffering

- ***He affirms the providence of God:*** *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. (Job 1:21-22)*
- ***He affirms the goodness of God:*** *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?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips. (Job 2:10)*

- **He affirms the sovereignty of God:** *Though he slay me, I will hope in him; (Job 13:15a)*
- **He affirms the faithfulness of God:** *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, (Job 19:25–26)*
- **He affirms the power and authority of God:** *“I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. (Job 42:2)*
- **He affirms his trust in God:** *But he knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold. (Job 23:10)*

E. The Evaluation of Job’s Character in the furnace of Suffering

- **Job 1:22:** *In all of this Job did not sin or charge God foolishly.*
- **Job 2:3:** *He still holds fast to his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason!*
- **Job 2:10:** *In all of this Job did not sin with his lips.*
- **Job 42:7:** *The Lord said to Elphaz 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!”*

God affirms and confirms the character of His servant Job in that:

- He never abandoned his faith in God
- He never wavered in his obedience to God
- He never spoke wickedly about God
- He never spoke sinfully to God

In the midst of incomprehensible suffering and spiritual attack, ***he turned to God, clung to God, and hoped in God*** with all of His strength and with all of His might.

IV. The Application (5:11c)

and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

- **You have “seen”** = you have witnessed and know with certainty
- And what you know has to do with the purposes (*telos – end*) of the Lord in the unexplained, unmitigated suffering of His people.
- **So what are His purposes:**

A. To prove the genuineness and preciousness of the faith of His faithful servants to everyone on earth and in heaven!

1 Peter 1:6–7: In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that

perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

B. To defeat and shame Satan in front of the Universe!

Revelation 12:10–11: And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.¹¹ And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

C. To strengthen, deepen, and mature the faith of His children.

James 1:3–4 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

D. To display the beauty and glory of His compassionate character and merciful nature.

Lamentations 3:21–23: But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:²² The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end;²³ they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

E. To develop and deepen the intimacy of His relationship with His servants through suffering.

Job 42:5: I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you;

Conclusion:

There is one final, cosmic purpose God had for the unexplained suffering of Job: ***To prepare His people for the coming of a Righteous Servant whose sufferings would be even greater than Job’s.***

Only one other Righteous Servant will face the fierce storm of Satan’s personal attack to the same degree, and more than 2000 years will pass before He appears. Like Job, this Righteous Servant will face personal accusations, spiritual attacks, and physical assaults from Satan’s own mouth and hand. Like Job, he will remain faithful to the very end of God’s purposes. But, unlike Job, this Righteous Servant will endure beyond the extent of Job’s suffering – He will endure and faithfully obey unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil 2:5-8).

And that Righteous Servant took upon Himself all of the guilt of sin and willingly embraced the full depth of suffering so that by his faithfulness and obedience to the very end of suffering when it led to His violent death on the Cross!

- He displayed what joyful, faithful obedience to God looks like to the entire universe
- He revealed how that obedience is energized by the Spirit of God and enabled by the Word of God
- He testifies to the gracious compassion and sustaining Mercy of God in the midst of suffering
- He verifies and validates the wonderful reward that God promises to all who persevere in their own season of suffering

And James states that reward plainly in 1:12 – *Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.*