

The Patience of Job and the End of the Lord

Part 1

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Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.

[00:00:01] I begin by reading a brief sentence, which you needn't find, because our scripture reading will be elsewhere.

I'm reading from the epistle of James, chapter 5, a part of verse 11.

Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.

The theme I have before me this evening is the lesson, I think this one great lesson, of the book of Job.

And it is epitomized in these two phrases from James, chapter 5, the patience of Job and the end of the Lord.

I'm convinced that the saints should frequently return again to pour over this unique book, which deals in the most fundamental way with the sufferings of the saints.

[00:01:01] It doesn't by any means tell the whole story, it doesn't say anything at all about the wonderful change that the coming of the Saviour and His death and resurrection has made, but the principles of godliness never change. There's nothing dispensational, inherently, about the principles of godliness. The book of Psalms is a great textbook of godliness, and this is a very important aspect of godliness.

The sufferings of the saints, the sufferings of the saints. There will be here, this evening, many people who in various degrees are conscious of suffering.

Suffering is not confined to the old, the young suffer in a way which is to them inexpressible, that we often overlook.

And suffering often lasts years and years and years after the immediate cause of it. In our area recently, the area in the north, where I live, we were confronted by a most extraordinary tragedy.

[00:02:04] A young brother, really only beginning to drive out on the road, in the winter roads, going to work in the morning, and he's suddenly cut off by an almost inexplicable accident.

And it came over me very much indeed that in the suffering that comes from those who remain in the case of death, there's nothing more poignant, there's nothing more appealing than the cutting off of a young person who's just ended the period of family care, the period of parental training, the period of training of other kinds, education, just marriage, in every respect life before him, and leaving behind, as it were, the maximum number of those whose lives are wrapped up with his. You know, those people suffered tremendously, and it'll be years and years and years before they will hear of suffering without being able to think of this. There are, one might say, and I'm really trying to bring home to every one of us that we're all individually involved in this matter. [00:03:08] There's suffering connected with our possessions.

There are all kinds of disappointments, which might be disappointments really in the line of godliness. There might be disappointments relative to our progress in earthly things, or our plans in earthly things in which we have sought the guidance and the blessing of God. And when these are suddenly cut off, there's a disappointment, and there are many, many who are feeling sorrow of this kind relative to earthly things.

There is, of course, as I just referred to, the sorrow of bereavement. And in a number like this there are bound to be people who fairly nearly, I don't know, but have experienced bereavement, and there are bound to be some who years and years afterwards haven't lost the pain that came to them when their loved one or loved one was suddenly taken away. And there is the suffering of bodily pain.

[00:04:02] There will be some of you sitting here who are living day by day with pain. There are some of you who might start to live day by day with pain tomorrow. Pain is something which is never very far from us.

When we think of ourselves as suffering saints, then very frequently and very rightly our prayers go out to our brethren in other lands who are suffering, suffering for their faith, suffering physical pain, suffering deprivation of every kind. So the message of God regarding the sufferings of the saints is something which is the same for every kind of pain. Now Job was a saint.

You might think that that name ought to be confined to the New Testament, but of course it isn't. And as I open my Bible at the first chapter of Job, and I hope you'll do the same because I shall ask you to read fairly substantial proportions of it, you'll find about Job that he was a man perfect and upright, one that feared God and eschewed evil.

[00:05:04] I think the meaning of those statements that the Word of God makes about Job, who must have lived somewhere in the patriarchal times, perhaps because of the length of his life towards the end of the patriarchal times, but the Holy Scripture says about him that he was a perfect man and upright, one that feared God and eschewed evil. Now I think the only one of those expressions which perhaps needs a bit of explanation is the word perfect. None of us are perfect.

It's not just that kind of perfection that the Holy Scripture means when it talks about a man being perfect in the Old Testament. It means, and you might say that this is simply replacing a simple word by a difficult word, it means a man of integrity, a man whose life was one whole.

The sins and the sufferings of those whose lives deliberately forget God is one thing. But the sins and the sufferings of those whose lives are being set on the heavenly way, [00:06:03] they become the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, they become one with him where he is in the glory, they become

members of his body and his flesh and his bones. The sins and the sufferings of those whose path is set in the way of obedience and pleading to God, that is an integrity. And when a man of godly integrity sins, it doesn't destroy his godly integrity because he goes to God.

In confession and self-judgment like David did, who in spite of his sin was a man after God's own heart. Now Job was a man of integrity in that sense of the term.

And without turning over the pages to start with, there are other indications that Job was a saint in another sense that he was a man of faith. When his trial began to be bitterly expressed and felt by him, he said, though he slay me, yet will I trust him.

There was a man, you'll see, who in spite of his suffering was entirely devoted to subjection to the will of God. [00:07:03] He complained that he couldn't understand. He complained that he wanted to know the reason. He even thought that God was unjust to him, but he did not give up his integrity. He did not give up his devotion to God and to please him. Though I slay me, he slay me, yet will I trust him.

Of course the most wonderful thing that shines to make Job clearly a saint for us is his confession in chapter 19.

When he says, with the words driven out of him by his sufferings, he says, Oh, that my words were now written, verse 32 to 23, Oh, that they were written in a book, that they were graven upon with an iron pen and laid in the rock forever. For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.

For I shall see for myself, and mine eye shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me. [00:08:06] The only way to knowledge in a matter like this is faith. And faith can only be in the word of God, the testimony of God. We have no idea how the testimony of these truths came to Job.

But they did come to Job, and Job believed them, and therefore he could say, I know that my Redeemer liveth.

It was a rudimentary statement of his knowledge of the Saviour who was then about to come, but it's a very wonderful one. My Redeemer.

It might have said, The Redeemer. But in this difficult passage, there's nothing more certain than the personal pronoun. My Redeemer.

You have a very lovely statement of the meaning of Redeemer in the close by, the story of Ruth.

We read there that whereas there might have been persons who had no right or no wish to redeem her, [00:09:05] there were some who had the power and the right to redeem her, but they were not willing, he was not willing to do so. And then there was a person who had the right to redeem her, and the power to redeem her, and the willingness to redeem her. And so he paid the price of her redemption, and she became his. That was Boaz paying the price of redemption for Ruth.

Now Job, you see, Job in his suffering.

He sees by faith, and it's right in the middle of his lamentation, but we can see that there's not the slightest question with Job of the doubt regarding his future. Oh no, it's the present that's Job's trouble. And it might be like that with us. We are quite certain of our future, but oh how sufferings can distress us at the present time. Job knew. He knew the person by whom our Redeemer liveth. He knew of his own link with him by the program my.

He knew that Job himself was going to see him. [00:10:03] There's been a great deal of learned argument and discussion about the very difficult question of the text at this point, and the translation at this point.

But I sometimes think that perhaps the translators always try to make out a sentence to be a perfectly grammatical whole. I sometimes wonder why we cannot see here a succession of sobs. Not complete sentences, but a collection of sobs.

My Redeemer liveth. He shall stand at last upon the earth. After my skin, destroy this body. In my flesh I shall see God.

You see, if you miss out those words, the certainty is as clear as ever. He's going to see God in resurrection, which has been the hope of the righteous from this page from the early dawn of history, right through to the last page when we read, his servants shall serve him. They shall see his face and his name shall be upon their foreheads. Job was of the company of those who had the sure certain hope of, through his Redeemer, seeing God in resurrection.

[00:11:09] Now, we may rejoice that although our knowledge of the Saviour, our knowledge of the Redeemer, is so much fuller than Job's was, and that there has been brought to us the fullness of the truth that now surrounds him where he is, at the right hand of God in heavenly glory. Yet, in the end, Job's faith was enough that he was brought through to a true prosperity. Job was a saint.

Now, it's necessary that we should all know the story in detail.

I don't want to leave even a tenth of my audience unaware of the details of the story, and therefore I'm going to read a fairly substantial section, but not more than a few minutes. But I want everyone with the Bible open to listen very carefully for the details of the story.

The thing that has lately struck me, as I've come back to read the book of Job, there are two things that have struck me very strongly, [00:12:01] and you need to know the story to appreciate them. The first one is this.

Right to the very end of the story, when the last word was written and the book closed, Job never knew about that interview between God and Satan that began it all.

Job wanted to understand, and in the end he was given the understanding that was necessary. Now mine eyes see of thee, and I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. But the real origin of the calamities that fell upon him, right to the very end, he never knew.

And there's never any promise that we shall know the real origins of the distresses that come upon us, the perils of them we might know. But Job never knew. And when you read the story, it's a staggering fact. Of all the words, and all the explanation, and all the urging, Job never knew that it

was all started by God when Satan entered his presence amongst the sons of God. And the other very striking, and to me still a surprisingly unexpected thing, when in the end, when all the cloud of words has died away, and Jehovah answers Job out of the whirlwind, what will he say?

[00:13:11] How will he explain the things that Job's friends had failed to explain? How will he complete the explanation which was begun by Elihu? He didn't do it. Not one word of explanation of himself did God utter.

Not one word to answer the questions that Job had answered. It was entirely concerned with the things of this earth and nature. And the Lord spoke about the inanimate things, the sea, and the earth, and the storm. And then the animate things, that is, the beasts and the birds, and right to the end when he speaks about Leviathan. But not one word of a spiritual kind, not one word of explanation, only the presence of God was in the words.

And it brought Job to know himself.

And that was the end of the Lord, to bring Job through to true prosperity by realizing the presence of the Lord.

[00:14:05] And as we read those words, although we won't read them very much this evening, but we must remember that in those words there was mediated the presence of God. And the real problem for Job had been that although he was a saint, although he could say, I know that my Redeemer liveth, he was not really habituated to the effect of the presence of God. Think of all the stalwarts in the Old Testament days who realized the presence of God. Woe is me, for I am undone.

For I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the Lord of hosts. And then a cold flew from the altar, and he was sent on his commission. Think of Elijah and that still, small voice, and the voice that said to him, what dost thou hear, Elijah? And through the presence of God, he realized that he had to condemn himself and get back to the work that God had given him to do. And so we have so many examples. And this is one of the greatest, that it was to bring Job into the realized presence of God, above all in his immense, immeasurable, unimaginable greatness. [00:15:08] It's far too big, Job, for you to understand that your faith is justified. And Job was brought to realize the real question that he needed to learn, and that is to learn himself, and to abhor himself, and to judge himself. There's a great desire amongst us to read the works of the brethren, and I am fully in support of this. But there's one almost ceaselessly mentioned matter in those writings that seems to have slipped away, and that is self-judgment. Supposing we say that denominations are a mass of disobedience, and they are a mass of disobedience. Supposing we say they're not gathered together in the name of the Lord, and they are not gathered together in the name of the Lord. How can we be kept in a right spirit before God, in a position which sounds to be so proud and so self-sufficient? And the earlier writers knew, self-judgment. They take every sentence of the word of God that comes to us, and use it to judge ourselves. [00:16:05] And if we judge ourselves, think of what it says, the Lord Jesus Christ said to those who come to be his disciples, let him deny himself.

It's not simply confessing I've done wrong. It's not simply judging the thing, but it's judging self, the root of all this. And it's only when we can do this that we have come to respond as we ought to respond to the high and deep truth that comes to us. Only thus will we be kept by the word of God in those parts of humility and righteousness, and response to him that are pleasing to God. Well now, I

want you, especially the younger people, you've almost certainly forgotten some detail of the story, but I want you to follow with me for a few minutes while we're reading the bare essentials of the story. I've spoken about Job, and let us start with scene 1 in verse 6 of chapter 1, which is seen as set in heaven.

The holy court of God, with the sons of God and the angels are there.

[00:17:04] Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job?

There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and astureth evil. Then Satan answered the Lord and said, Doth Job fear God for naught? Hast not thou made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. Now then, scene two is when the Lord says to Satan what he is to do.

[00:18:02] And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power. Only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord, and there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house. And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were ploughing, and the asses feeding beside them, and the Sabians fell upon them, and took them away. Yea, there hath slain the servants with the edge of the sword, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away. Yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house. [00:19:05] And behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and swept the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked am I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this, Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

Scene three is again set in the presence of God, when the sons of God are there. Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord. And the Lord said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God, and askeweth evil? [00:20:10] And still he holdeth fast his integrity, so thou movest me against him, to destroy him without cause. And Satan answered the Lord, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to his face. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand, but save his life. Scene, the next scene is Job once

again in the hand of Satan.

So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his head unto his crown. He took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal, and he sat down amongst the ashes. His wife tried to persuade him to curse God, but he refused, and did not sing with his lips. The next scene is between Job and his three friends. Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, there came every one from his own place, [00:21:06] Eliphaz the Temanite, Dodad the Shuhite, and Zothar the Nermathite, for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him, and to comfort him. And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice and wept. And they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven. So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him, for they saw that his grief was very great. Now the greater part of the book is engaged with these three men comforting Job. Without comforting, because they were quite wrong, and I'll speak about the line that they took in a few minutes. But when they had finished, and an interpreter, a true interpreter came along, and then afterwards the voice of God was heard, as I've already described, and we have the end of the story in chapter 42.

And so, the last scenes are Job, for the first time, in the presence of the Lord.

[00:22:04] Then Job answered the Lord and said, I know that thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. Who is he that kindeth counsel without knowledge? Therefore have I uttered that I understood not things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Here I beseech thee, and I will speak. I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now, when I seeth thee, therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. And a few verses that remain are that God, he reproves the friends for acting so foolishly, and he asks them to get Job to intercede, and so God turned the captivity of Job and brought him into a true prosperity.

Now, those long stretches of the book of Job, they're taken up, first of all, with the long speeches.

And I'm convinced that when the Lord, in the end, asks the question, who is this who obscures wisdom, who obscures knowledge, [00:23:07] then the Lord is saying just what we think, that there are a tremendous number of words to no purpose at all. That is, there are veins of interest in them and veins of truth, but they contribute nothing at all to the vindication of Job, the comfort of Job, or the true representation of God. There are some interesting things that you get, acquaint now thyself with God and be at peace. You get a word which tells us that God gives to his own songs in the night.

And, of course, there are very interesting things that have made the book of Job on everybody's lips, without their knowing that they are quoting the book of Job. When we read the very expression, Job's comforters, it means somebody who pretends to comfort, but is no comfort at all. And perhaps that expression, which is most familiar to us from the book of Job, is, I have escaped, chapter 29 I think it is, I have escaped with the skin of my teeth.

[00:24:03] Now, we use that, of course, as a kind of image of thinness. It was a close shave that.

But, of course, what it really means is that he was covered with boils from the crown of his head to his feet, and the only place that was not covered with boils, because there was no skin, was his teeth. So great was his suffering. I have escaped with the skin of my teeth.

Of the points of interest, to which I must come back a little later, there is only one other thing that I'd like to mention, and that is that the very last part of the words out of the whirlwind that the Lord speaks to Job deals with a creature called the Leviathan. Now, I'll point out when we come to it, it's a very interesting thing about the Leviathan, but I think at this stage I'd like to mention the fact that there's a great deal, once again, of learned discussion about what creature the Leviathan can be. And almost all authorities, including the margins of some of our Bibles, will say that Leviathan is the crocodile. Well, when you read what he says about Leviathan, and especially in the end when he says he's the king of beasts, [00:25:06] and he's absolutely unassailable in his pride, it can hardly be held to be the crocodile.

But a very interesting thing takes place these days. Dr. Armanillo has entered this field with his creationist society, and in their attempt to dispel as ridiculous the idea that we've got to go back 400 million years, and still in the history of the earth, you see, they discover that there are fossils that have both the footprints of a dinosaur and the footprints of man on the same piece of rock. Now, if, he says, if the dinosaur was extinct 400 million years ago, how can it possibly be on the same piece of rock as the foot of a man? Although it is 15 inches long, because there were giants in those days. And the fact of the matter is that that 400 million years is absolute imagination.

There's absolutely no kind of foundation for it at all, and Leviathan was on earth when man was upon earth, so he says. [00:26:08] And there's a great deal indeed to support it. But, when the Lord is talking about Leviathan, if you think of that creature that you see in the Natural History Museum of South Kensington, 70 feet long, one-third neck, one-third body, one-third tail, and a most savage display of teeth, then it's not surprising that the word that God says, when you see him, then you run for it. You're done when you see him. Now, I want you to keep that in mind, you see, when God speaks, he does come at the end to speak about Leviathan, and said some very remarkable things about it. Now, I've spoken a little bit already about the sufferings of Job, and I would like to return to them, because I did speak about the various kinds of sufferings that there are, and you can see that these are exactly the things that Job suffered. And we can easily see that it's the divine wisdom that selected these three things to be emblematic of the total range of human sufferings. [00:27:06] There was, first of all, the sudden loss of all his possessions, 7,000 sheep, 3,000 cattle, and so on, 500 camels and other things.

And then, after that, there was the total loss of his family. That was bereavement.

And after that, the most terrible pain came over him. It's very, very difficult to imagine the painful condition that is described by Job, with ulcers covering from head to foot, and absolutely no relief from day and night. There's a very remarkable passage which describes Job's night. Oh, I turn over and I sigh that it would come, that the day would come, the light would come. And when the light comes, it's just the same thing over again. I'm stretching myself with a pot shirt to relieve myself from the torment, and there's no end to it. Job's sufferings were the kind of sufferings that are very well known to us.

Of course, when we come to consider the problem of human suffering, then this is a partial picture. [00:28:07] It's important to us because it's true, it's fundamental, and it never changes. But, of course, when we think of suffering, I couldn't help but reflect upon it a bit this afternoon while we were hearing about the fact that Christ suffered. The Son of Man suffered death for all things. The Son of Man came and suffered death. And it's a wonderful thing that when he came, who came to save his people from their sins, when God sent him to be the Savior, that he was planted down at the very

heart of the misery of the human plight that is in death and suffering on account of our sins. That's the only complete answer to it, and, of course, it isn't given here. I'm saying this because we mustn't imagine it's the complete answer, but it's nevertheless still very important to us because the principles of godliness never change. And the lesson that Job had to learn is a lesson that we are bound to learn if we're going to live pleasing to God. [00:29:04] But it's a lesson oh, so difficult for us to do. We so easily, we so readily avoid it and take the happy and the pleasing signs of Christian life and fellowship and forget the sword of self-judgment which shall be wielded with it. Now, I will not attempt to say any more about the discourses of those so-called friends of Job.

But when we come to the words of Elihu, who seems to call himself the interpreter that Job asked for.

Job said, if I could only have somebody put my hand upon the throne of God and his hand upon me, and there could be some connection between us, some explanation between us. And Elihu does speak about the fact that a day's man, an interpreter, would bring about the solution that Job required.

If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand to show unto man his uprightness, then God is gracious unto him and saith, deliver him from going down to the pit. [00:30:07] I have found a ransom. His flesh shall be fresher than a child's. He shall return the day that his youth was sown. Elihu says the only complete answer to this is going to be when the full results of the coming of the interpreter have come to us. Now, I want to go once again to the words of the Lord, because I think they form a very important part of our lesson, and our time is passing quickly.

Will you turn now to chapter 38, where the Lord begins to speak. And when the Lord begins to speak, we read that he spoke out of the whirlwind.

Now, I don't know whether you have noticed it before, and now that I've pointed it out to you, are as surprised as I am that there's no explanation. And there's nothing in what the Lord says which is outside the bonds of man's life and the life of animals in the creation that we all know. [00:31:07] I suppose some folks would try to see something typical in them. But I cannot see that we have the slightest justification for this. The Lord is taking up something to which Elihu brought them, and that is, he's displaying the immense greatness of God.

If Job could not ask one-tenth of the 10,000 questions and problems that arise about nature, how could he expect to understand God?

And God speaks about, first of all, the inanimate things, the earth and the sea and the clouds and the hail and the rain. And the Lord shows three things about them. One is that he designed them. Second, that he created them. And thirdly, he controls them.

And when one considers the whole range of the inanimate creatures that make up the world and the worlds, when we consider the whole range of the living creatures that make up... God commands them to do this. It says God commands the eagle. All the eagles on the earth, all moving as they're commanded by God. [00:32:07] All the hail on the earth going to execute the demands of God. We cannot understand those movements, and we cannot conceive in our minds the being with a mind who could embrace the whole of it. And it's this lesson. Job, it's altogether too great for you to distress yourself by trying to probe to the bottom of this question and seek for explanations,

explanation why and why. No. God, in his counsels and purposes and actions, is too big altogether for you. And then the Lord changes, rather, when he comes to the end. And what I was saying about Leviathan is in chapter 41. And if you could turn over to chapter 41, you would see one verse, which is verse 10, that gives us the reason why God was giving all this explanation about animals to the suffering saint, Job.

[00:33:01] Who do we feel like saying, what has it got to do with Job to have all this explanation? Well, the presence of the Lord was in this. If you look at this verse 10, I think I'd like a bit of context. Let us say verse 8 about Leviathan.

Lay thine hand upon him. Think of this seventy-foot creature in the naturalist museum, and think of your meeting him. And this is what it says. Lay thine hand upon him, remember the battle, and do no more. Behold, the hope of him is vain. Shall not one be cast down, even at the very sight of him? None is so fierce to dare stir him up, who then is able to stand before me.

If one of God's creatures terrifies to death the man who sets his eyes upon him, and you can understand it when you see the beast. If one of God's creatures can terrify a man, how foolish and wrong it was for Job to persist and persist in questioning God. Job maintained his righteousness, and we are told that he was an upright man. [00:34:02] But, of course, Job also charged God with injustice in what he had done.

Now, God doesn't exactly reprove Job for this.

Elihu did, but God doesn't reprove him.

God is altogether, in his words, out of the whirlwind, given over to showing Job that it's quite impossible for Job to cope with questions that arise in God. God giveth no account of himself.

And in those things regarding his counsel and his design that lie behind the things that are done, we can expect God to give account. And this is only in earthly things.

Well, the presence of God was mediated in what Job heard and saw.

And I do hope that you will be able to lay hold of this word, which brought the end of the Lord.

Job's patience was manifested when he didn't curse God when his wife said, curse God. Job's patience was manifested when he said, though he slay me, yet will I trust him. Job's patience was manifested when he said, naked I came out of the womb, and naked shall I return. [00:35:06] Blessed be the name of the Lord. That was Job's patience.

But the end of the Lord was fire.

I abhor myself and repent.

Job sailed into prosperity.

It was earthly prosperity.

Those who want to make this a kind of parable say that he had 7,000 sheep to start with, and in the end he had 14,000.

And he had 3,000 sheep, and in the end he had 6,000. And whereas he had 500 before, he now had 1,000, exactly double in every case. But it doesn't seem to me that that's a valid point at all. It's history all right. And these are those figures which demonstrate the prosperity of an earthly kind into which Job went. Now, the principles of godliness apply to us when our horizon is on greater things. And in a few minutes that remain, I want to speak, you see, about the difference that the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit from Christ where he is in glory has made for us. [00:36:02] There's no change in the principles.

And we can see in those one or two examples of suffering saints in the New Testament the same reticence about the cause of things which is in realms that we can never hope to understand. I think perhaps first of all we'll read the passage, I hope it's well known to you, about the passage in 2 Corinthians chapter 12 when the apostle Paul spoke about the fact that he was caught up into the third heaven and he saw things and heard things which are unutterable. But then he says, in order that he might not be lifted up above measure, God gave him a messenger of Satan to buffet him, a thorn in the flesh, lest he should be lifted up by pride. Now that's a clear example of suffering in the New Testament. You see, there's no indication at all of the kind of origin in the thoughts of God by which this was brought about.

[00:37:02] The end of it, you see, the purpose of it was plain, and that is to keep Paul humble. And Paul was indeed driven by it to an ever fuller experience of the Lord Jesus when he said, Most gladly therefore will I suffer in firmity that the power of Christ rest upon me. My strength, said the Lord, is made perfect in weakness. I often think about a kind of a mechanical example of this. If you think of the power in a certain gear wheel and another construction which is acquiring that power.

But the gear wheels don't fit, you see, the gear wheels don't fit. Now when it says there, my strength is made perfect in weakness, it means that the power of Christ, to lift us above the liability we have to all kinds of errors of the spirit, is not geared to our strength but is geared to our weakness. It's only in felt weakness, and this is an aspect of I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes, it's only in experience and confessed weakness that the power of Christ is geared to us, [00:38:05] and the will of God will be done through us. And I will close by turning to the chapter, the Acts, which seems to me to be a wonderful epitome of the idea of suffering saints and the purpose of it all.

In Acts chapter 7 we read about the first martyr Stephen, and of course I have no time to dwell upon this story.

But if we think of this terrible suffering of Stephen, they stoned him, they put him to death there and then, with blood flying everywhere, and he's killed there, he's stoned and he died. And here is the end of a suffering saint, when his suffering was really to the glory of God.

And there are two things here in these verses that I'm going to read, I want you to note them. Two things, first is what he saw, and the second thing is what he said.

[00:39:02] His vision and his witness.

Verse 55, That brings us back to where we were this afternoon. The Son of Man is there at the right

hand of God.

Now here is a suffering saint, there are almost certainly things behind that he never thought of, but he was serving God's purpose in this terrible suffering that came upon him, and he was immediately ushered into the perfect comfort and the perfect light and the perfect joy of being there with the Lord Jesus Christ. He said that he saw Jesus at the right hand of God.

And that's the real heart and culmination of Christian truth, what is centered upon Jesus at the right hand of God. [00:40:04] Evangelical Christendom and its piety is largely centered upon the earthly life of the Lord Jesus. But true Christianity must find its center where Jesus is at the right hand of God. And the suffering saints can see there the real end and conclusion of all that comes to them. He looked up into heaven, saw the glory of God and Jesus standing there. And he immediately continued with the last breath of his body to witness to the reality of that Savior, that Son of Man there in heaven. Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. I want to dwell for a few moments upon what I would like to bring before you as a principal lesson of the story of Job, if not the lesson.

And that is his realizing the presence of God in such a way as he abhorred self.

Now, this is not by any means a popular department of truth.

[00:41:05] Because it doesn't, we don't react sympathetically to the idea that self has got to be denied.

Why do you think that there is so much of the slack and spineless about our Christianity today?

It's because we have forgotten such words of the Savior. If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off. If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out.

There has to be ruthless judgment on self. I don't mean, of course, I don't think the Savior meant that this was to be taken literally. He spoke in another place against it. There has to be ruthless judgment, the application of God's judgment.

Whenever, reading the scriptures, we read, for example, laying aside all malice. What do you do when you read that? Does the Spirit of God bring to your mind personal feeling against a person?

Laying aside all malice and guile and hypocrisy and envy, envy, ever-fine envy and evil speaking.

[00:42:07] They are to be laid aside. They are not to be passed over. The Word of God will reveal and bring us so into the presence of God as we can abhor ourselves and we can judge ourselves in the light of the cross and judging ourselves in the light of the cross. Then the Spirit is not grieved.

And then the power of the Holy Spirit, taking of the reality of Christ there in heavenly glory, is to be made good to us. But unless there is this application of the cross, then we are turning our backs upon an enormous portion of the New Testament.

Why do you think it says in Colossians, mortify, kill, put to death our members that are upon the earth?

It's a job to be done. Am I doing it?

Are you, as you read Holy Scripture, allowing it so to search you that it goes into the inner corners of your heart and you see yourself in the sight of God and you do what God has done and you judge it, you turn away from it. [00:43:04] And then the way is open for an ungrieved spirit to fill you with the real vision of Christ where he is and to give you the real freedom that comes from walking in the truth.

Well, I repeated one or two scriptures and I'm led to close by repeating them again. It's a negative thing, but it's because we have so little given attention to the need of dealing with self and the manifestations of the frightful crowd of evil beasts that dwells in each one of us that there's so little of the other side, and that is being full of the Spirit and with boldness witnessing and at the same time entering into the reality of heavenly truth. In the first epistle of Corinthians, when it talks about women having their heads covered, it says because of the angels.

[00:44:03] Well, there's a plain indication that there are things which lie behind the directions that God gives to us that are hidden from us. They belong to the heavenly sphere and we're not told very much about it. It's plain enough in Ephesians chapter 6 that there are principalities and powers in heavenly places that are setting themselves against every move that we make to enter into our true canon. You see, there are great things behind the struggle that we have that are never explained to us. But what is open to us is to remember these words that a man examined himself.

You say, we're not going for introspection. No, not only introspection. It's cutting. It's killing. It's sword work. It's not introspection. Let a man examine himself. If we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged with the world.

I've heard of these, says Job, with the hearing of mine ear. But now mine eyes see a thing, and I bow myself and repent in just their eyes. And so Job sailed into true prosperity and there is spiritual prosperity ahead of us if we learn this basic lesson that came to Job. [00:45:09] Ahem.