

God's Vindication

Job: View from the Ashes series #6

by Chris Famisaran

Aren't you grateful for our praise team? And thank you, Ben. Always love your little, little piano Enders.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, thank you, Lord, for the opportunity to come together as a church family. As we talk and conclude with Job, Be with us in Jesus name, Amen.

I'm sure many of you are wondering, okay, Pastor, what's the answer? Why does God allow suffering? I'm going to put this at the beginning of this sermon. It's not what you expect. You ready? Okay, buckle in.

So for the last six weeks, we've been going through the Book of Job. And for those maybe who have not been here throughout, or maybe this is your first time, a little backstory in that Job begins with a man who was from Uz. He was very wealthy. He had a lot of flocks. He had 10 children, seven boys, three girls. And there's a heavenly council. And Satan, or the devil accuses God that he's made it too easy for Job. And if he were to suffer and experience loss, he would turn around and curse God. And so God says, okay, fine, here you go. Go ahead. The only rule is you can't physically touch him. So the devil goes, either kills or takes his flocks away. They're stolen. His 10 children are killed, his servants are killed. He's basically left with nothing. And yet does he curse God? No, he doesn't. And so the devil goes back and he says, you know, you didn't actually let me get to actually hurt him. Let me physically hurt him, and then, then he will change his mind. So God says, okay, and what does he. What does the devil give him? Boils, Right? Some say leprosy. Don't know exactly. All we know is it was painful and it was itchy because he took a piece of pottery and he would start to scratch himself because it was so, so, so bad. And at that point, Mrs. Job says, are you still actually trying to believe curse God already? She takes off.

Now, along the way, Job's friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Job come, and they sit with him for a whole week. And then after the week, Job responds. And from chapters 4 to 31 are three sets of discussions where they go back and forth. And mind you, Job is a book of poetry, actually Hebrew poetry. But it's also, as we're going to learn, it's also a book of wisdom. If you were to kind of collect Job, it's Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, and I also believe Lamentations. And there's wisdom in this book. But over these chapters, Job, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar go back and forth and what's revealed quite a bit. Unfortunately for Job, he's got to listen to them.

And one of the things I also want to point out too, when God is referred, he's not referred to as Yahweh or Elohim. He's actually referred to as El Shaddai. Now, in a previous small group, we studied El Shaddai. Does anybody remember. What else should I mean? God Almighty or maybe the mountain? So by the way, if you're following along, please take a screenshot. Or if you're already here, you should have a paper. These verses are here. We're going to go to these verses a little bit. But God is regularly referred to El Shaddai. Okay, El Shaddai. And as Mark eloquently pointed out, God Almighty. You could also say the mountain. And what does this drum up? It appears that although God is mighty, but especially in the context of, for instance, the mountain, you look at a mountain and it seems so far or maybe so big, so complex, so distant. And as you read through the book, you'll realize that it takes a while. And it's not until chapter 38 that God finally responds. And it's here that Job struggles. Struggles. Why is this happening to me? I have done nothing wrong. And yet what do Bildad, Zophar and Eliphaz point out? You have to have done something wrong. Otherwise all of this distress and everything that you've experienced is all for naught. That's their perspective.

Now, I believe it was, David Atkinson writes, God has been given his personal covenant name, Yahweh, in the prologue to the Book of Job. And there we're introduced to Job, and we're invited to reflect on God's personal relationship with them. And throughout the chapters from 3 to 37, the name Yahweh is not used. God is called El Shaddai, God the Almighty. And in the book of Job, he's become a way of speaking of this, has become a way of speaking of God as detached and distance. With Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, Shaddai has become a God not of personal grace and security, but of distance,

detachment, impersonal almighty power. They got used to saying the name of God, which originally spoke of grace in a way that denied grace. Their theology had become upside down. How barren theology can become if one loses touch with the gracious heart of God. The personal closeness of the covenant Lord has given way to a distance of God's majesty and might.

So throughout the book, we see that Job's friends continue to pour on the attack. Instead of comforting Job, when you're going through a hard time, should you point out to somebody everything that they've been doing wrong? Or should you maybe, maybe go and try to comfort them now? Maybe their way of comforting was pointing out his sin. Okay, how many of you want friends like that? I'm sorry. I know I love everybody, but do I want to be around people who tell me every single thing that I've done wrong? Doesn't sound fun right now.

Job's friends, in a way, are correct that if you make a mistake, you should own up to your mistake. But they lack one thing. And what's that? The perspective of what's really, actually happening. If they were to know that there's actually a battle between good and evil taking place, something that we call in the Adventist church the great controversy, we see that God and Satan are at war. The devil's trying so hard to prove that he is right, and we'll learn that he's wrong. Because God, who's omnipotent, omnipresent, all powerful, has trust that Job will come out of this. But they lack the perspective of what's actually really happening, the battle between good and evil. Would they have acted differently if they knew what was actually really happening? Would they have been kinder? Would they have been more compassionate or more empathetic? As Bill pointed out last week, their whole ministry to Job was nullified again because they assumed that they were right, arrogantly right, and Job was wrong. And even if Job was wrong, do we talk about kicking them down? No, we don't.

Now, after all three discourses, okay, going back and forth in chapter 38, God responds. So let's go to Job. Chapter 38. Okay, Job 38. And again, it's going to be poetic, maybe prose. Are we all there? Okay, starting at verse one. Then the Lord spoke to Job out of the storm. He said, who is it that obscures my plans with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man. I will question you,

and you shall answer me. Was this the way that Job expected an answer? Who's put on trial now? Job, in a sense. And some of you are thinking, has Job not already gone through enough? God, why are you being like this to Job? The answer will be revealed. Verse 4. I love this passage. Where were you when I learned what laid what? The earth's foundations Tell me if you understand, who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know, who stretched a measuring line across it, on what were its footings set? Or who laid its cornerstone while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy? Who shut up the sea behind doors? And when it burst forth from the womb, when I made the clouds its garments and wrapped in it thick darkness, when I fixed limits for it and set its doors and bars in place, and when I said, this far you come and no further, where here is where the proud waves halt. What is God trying to say? Is that the earth is way more complex, this universe is way more complex. Then you think, are you able to understand Job as I, God, am able to understand? Is what God is trying to point out to Job.

If you continue on, of course. 38, 39. Let's jump to chapter 40 now. Okay, let's jump to chapter 40, starting at verse one. The Lord then says to Job, who? Sorry, will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who accuses God answer him. And as you've been reading along in the passages, you realize that Job not only dealing with his friends is exasperated and frustrated. He actually deals with God directly, basically screaming, Lord, answer me. He's so frustrated at some points that he says, I don't even have an ability to talk to God. There's no mediator. There's nobody in between. I can't ask any questions. I cannot get answers. And so God now finally responds, will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Is Job going to try to correct God? Let him accuse God, answer him.

And here's where Job responds. Verse 4. I am unworthy. How can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth. I spoke once, but I have no answer twice. But I will say no more. Job is overwhelmed by the magnitude and the magnificence of God because he realizes how much more powerful God is. And God has a different perspective than Job. Not exactly where you thought we were going to go. Amen. Then the Lord spoke to Job out of the storm. Brace yourself like a man. I will question you, and you will answer me. Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself? Do you have

an arm like God's? And can your voice thunder like his? Then adorn yourself with glory and splendor and clothe yourself in honor and majesty. Unleash the fury of your wrath. Look at all who are proud and bring them low. Look at all who are proud and humble them. Crush the wicked where they stand. Bury them all in the dust together. Shroud their Faces in the grave. And then I will admit myself. Then I myself will admit to you that you are your own right hand can save you. Does Job have the ability to respond to God like this? No. He's but a human. He's but immortal.

Back in the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln, he had some critics. One of them in particular was the London Times, which was very, apparently a very influential paper at the time. This was one of Lincoln's strongest, fiercest critics during the Civil War. And when Lincoln pronounced the Emancipation Proclamation to free the slaves, they basically called him a sort of moral American pope destined to be Lincoln the last. And yet three years later, after he was assassinated, they responded with eulogizing. Abraham Lincoln was as little a tyrant as any man who ever lived. He could have been a tyrant if he pleased. But he never uttered so much as an ill natured speech having detractors. Have you ever wanted to tell somebody I told you so?

Continuing on. We'll come back to that. Just go to Job. Sorry. We see that Job has been through a lot. And Job responds in a way that's not expected. What we can take from that is that God's perspective is different than our perspective on earth. And unfortunately it's limited. Amen. We don't always see everything that's happening around us. And that can be challenging and frustrating because do we not want answers? Don't we want to know why things happen the way that they do? And sometimes God will be able to reveal that to us. And sometimes God says, wait now poor Job has had to deal with his friends. Eliphaz Temanite.

Let's go to Job. Chapter 42, verses 1 through 9. There's a conclusion to these guys because they don't get off lightly. It says verse one in chapter 42. Then Job replied to the Lord, I know that you can do all things. No purpose of yours can be thwarted. You asked, who is it that obscures my plans without knowledge? Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. Job acknowledges that this universe and you, God, are beyond

my comprehension. You said, listen now and I will speak. I will question you. You shall answer me. My ears have heard you, but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and I repent in dust and ashes.

What is Job ultimately saying? Despite everything, Lord, I will not curse you. I will continue to trust in you even when I don't understand the way. Now, after all of this is said, there's a little epilogue. The Lord has said these things to Job. He said to Eliphaz at Temanite, I'm angry with you and your two friends, Bildad and Zophar. So now take seven bulls and seven rams, go to my servant Job and sacrifice a burnt offering for yourselves. My servant Job will what? Pray for you. And I will accept this prayer and not deal with you according to your folly. You have not spoken the truth about me. Did they not misrepresent God from chapters four through 31? Absolutely, because they spoke basically on behalf of God. And did they have the proper perspective of everything that was happening? They didn't. So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Zohite, Zophar, Naamathite . I did what the Lord told them. And the Lord accepted Job's prayer.

How would you feel if you were Job? Would you be glad to pray for them? Some of you internally are thinking, yeah, I'll pray for them. I really don't want to pray for them. They were rude to me. They said all kinds of horrible things. Basically, my children deserve what they got. Would you be as graceful as Job was? Ooh, tough. Now, if you read the end You understand that now God calls these guys out. They're dealt with.

But what about Job? How does the book end? Job has experienced all of this hardship. What happens to him? I actually want to go back now. I want to go back to chapter 19, because it's here that we'll see that we have perspective. Chapter 19. And I want to read verse. Let's start at 21. Job 19, verse 21. It says, have pity on me, my friends, have pity. For the hand of God has struck me. Why do you pursue me as God does? Will you never get enough of my flesh? Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll, that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead or engraved in rock forever. Now, this is what I want you to especially point out. To point out verse 25. I know that my Redeemer. What My Redeemer lives. And that in the end he will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in the flesh I will see God. I

will see him with my own eyes, I and not another. How my heart yearns within me.

He knows that there's this sense of a Redeemer that is out there for him. And the idea of a Redeemer is not just limited to Job here, verse 25. Again, he points to a Redeemer. And in the Old Testament, there is this idea of a redeemer. Throughout the book of the Old Testament, in Leviticus, it points out that if someone lost their property or they were enslaved, a family member or somebody could come in and try to buy the land back, right? Or purchase them out of slavery. Number 35 points out that sometimes they would go and avenge a loved one. I don't, I don't encourage you to do that. In today's times, you'll get in trouble for that. But in all seriousness, they would take on caring for the spouse or the children through a levirate marriage found in Deuteronomy 20:30. Sorry, Deuteronomy 25. Or in the story of Ruth, who helped redeem Ruth Boaz. He was her kinsman, Redeemer. We also are reminded of Job speaking about the redeeming angel in Genesis 48.

And so we see that in Job, his whole life is turned upside down. Does God abandon him? Quite the opposite. Not only does he have cattle and herds, they're double the amount. And God is blessed again with seven sons and three daughters. The only difference here now is the three daughters are actually named and God. Was God rewarding him? God wasn't rewarding him. He was simply restoring, redeeming that which he had lost. And so Job, it says he lived to be 140 years, down to the fourth generation, and was content. Now, how do we summarize all this, my friends?

A number of years ago, I think it was Rob Bell who shared a point at one of his videos that he made for Pneuma. And it's the end of, I think, the movie, the film Whirlwind. And I want to read this quote to you. We want answers. We want explanations. We want to know why we suffer, why we do. Can somebody please explain this? And there are times when the only honest, healthy human thing to do, to raise or shout your questions, perhaps, maybe sometimes you are feeling shake your fist, rage against the heavens and demand an explanation. But true wisdom, true wisdom and the kind we find with Job that endures is the kind that sustains a person through suffering. That kind of wisdom knows when to speak and when to be silent. Because your

story is not yet over. There are things happening around that we are not maybe aware of, but God is. And so when you experience a time of hardship, know that God has not abandoned you. God did not put us in places where we will be overcome. There are many examples where, yes, plenty of suffering. And as we mentioned earlier today, a number of our family members here at the church are either going through something physically or have lost a loved one. We live in a broken world, unfortunately. God. When God created Adam and Eve, God created, just created robots and worshiped him. But again, is that true love? Not those of you who are parents, you know this very well. Your children will grow and they get to make their own decisions. Some of those decisions you love and some of them you cringe. But when they become adults, they can make decisions on their own. There's only so much that you can do to implore, to nurture, to mentor, disciple. And as well, we live in a world where we're given free choice. This is best exemplified on the freeway. Some people choose to love and choose to drive the speed limit or at least look out for everyone's safety. And there are some people who think they're above everybody else and make their own decisions, which can sometimes lead to very drastic results. And that is the world that we live in.

So what do we say? Vindication. God was vindicated. And to a degree, Job also was vindicated. He was vindicated from his friends that, yeah, he didn't do anything, but God was also vindicated in the sense of, I am God. There are more things bigger and ever than you could ever imagine that is happening. But please trust Me and know that you will overcome.

So reflection. Am I different than any of Job's friends? And before you say, no, I'm not, when's the last time you judged somebody or you thought that person is so not making great choices? When's the last time we judged somebody? When was the last time we wanted to just scream at somebody because they're wrong? When was the last time we lacked compassion when somebody could have just said, hey, how are you? And make them feel seen? When was the last time you could have helped somebody and you said, no, you're not worth my time today, or I'm busy to be. If I were Job, if I were to be Job, and I wish my friends, I would hope that we listen. Compassion, have compassion in prayer. And that's something that's very real, especially that hit us this week.

Please continue to pray for our family members. And these are the only ones that we know of. I know there's more going on in this church that we need to pray for one another, but maybe we're not able to publicly mention it or we're not ready to share it. So pray for one another. We need a lot of prayer. Amen. But also be compassionate, be empathetic, don't rush to conclusions. Love. And even if someone makes a mistake lead with love and don't kick them while they're down.

This week, faithfully go to God with your questions. Some of you maybe felt a little uncomfortable and I said, shaken rage. Did anybody ever get upset with God and tell them, no, I'm not going to do that? What do you think of Moses when God basically says, I'm going to scorch the earth because all of my people have disobeyed me, and Moses tells God, you're not going to do that? Part of me thinks that God did that to raise the awareness in Moses and to take ownership and shepherd the people because Moses put his life on the line. Does not God already know what's going through our head? Doesn't God already know when we're upset with God or with other people? God already knows. And sometimes it is painful. Sometimes when we're grieving, when we're angry, it's okay to ask questions and take those questions to God. And sometimes there's a moment to say something and remember there's also a time where we should also be silent and reflect and wait upon the Lord. So faithfully go to God with your questions and trust in God's wisdom. That is the story of Job.

Father in Heaven. Thank you, Lord, for both. A thrilling but also very challenging book. There's a lot of lessons we can take. And yet sometimes even today, Lord, we all have questions. I myself have a lot of questions as to why certain things play them out. And I, Lord, I ask, why God? But I know that in your infinite wisdom, you know better. So help us, Lord, to have faith. Whether we're grieving, we're upset, we're trying to figure out the next phase of our life, whatever it may be, that's on our hearts. Lord, help us to be patient and to trust your leading. And so until then, Lord, help us to love one another wherever we are, wherever we work, wherever we go to school, do our shopping. Help us to be the reflection of you to our neighbors. In Jesus name. Everybody said Amen.

Grace and peace everyone.