

Job How to Come Out of Thick Darkness

by James Jennings

This sermon delves into the book of Job, highlighting six key lessons on how to come out of thick darkness and depression. It emphasizes the importance of treasuring God's Word, maintaining a right view of God's sovereignty, and recognizing that trials are used by God to sanctify believers. The sermon encourages believers to seek God in prayer, live righteously, and trust in God's refining work during trials.

Scripture: Job 23:10, James 5:11, 1 Peter 1:6, Philippians 1:28, Deuteronomy 8:3, Hebrews 12:6, Acts 2:23, Philippians 1:6

Topics: "Overcoming Darkness", "Trusting God's Sovereignty"

Description

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Transcript

Well, turn in your Bibles to the book of Job. And basically, I have two parts of this message. And Job, if you find the book of Psalms, go to the left one and you'll find Job right there.

I want to establish the context of Job, the beginning and the end briefly, because if I don't do that and we hop right in the middle, I don't know how much you know about the book of Job, and it would be helpful to remember certain things that are going to help us interpret chapter 23. We're eventually going to get to chapter 23, and I want to look at six things that we can learn from Job about how to come out of thick darkness and depression. So how to come out of thick darkness and depression, which chapter 23 is kind of a halfway point of him coming out of thick darkness.

And he uses that very word throughout the book. So, to start though in chapter 1, let me pray. Father, Lord, we just thank You that Your mercies are new.

We thank You, Lord, that we can sing the Psalms of Zion. And Lord, we're just grateful to serve You. Lord, what a privilege.

Lord, just the fact we can serve You. Lord, all these other things are just amazing that You would have plucked us out of the fire. Lord, we pray for Connie.

Be with her. Allow her to recover physically. And yes, Lord, be with Paul Washer as he's recovering from COVID, and Anthony, Mathenia, and these others.

Lord, we just pray that You'd preserve people through the sickness. And yet at the same time, Lord, we recognize it is Your will for some to die in sickness, and You use that for Your purposes. And so, Lord, we're here today as little creatures who, Lord, there's so much of Your purposes that we do not know.

And Lord, we lay our hand on our mouth and say You do whatever You please. In Jesus' name, Amen. So Job, if you don't know much about him, Job was unique, right? He was not an average man at all.

Chapter 1, if you look at verse 3, talks about his possessions, which means he was a man of wealth. 7,000 sheep. It wasn't like they had money in a bank account.

As much as it was, they had property. And the end of verse 3 says he was the greatest of all the people of the east. That's in a physical realm.

At least, right there. Greatest of all the people in the east. And then it says in 1.8, the Lord says to Satan, as you know when Satan and the angels come before the Lord, the Lord says to Satan, this is God's description of Job.

Have you considered My servant Job? This is what the Lord is saying. This is amazing. I mean, the Lord actually says about this man, He says, there is none like him on earth.

What a statement. There's none like him on earth. And then He goes on to explain.

Now, He's not hitting on wealth. That was the author earlier, but the Lord hits on what? There's not a man like him on earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil. So Job was a man in a spiritual realm and in a physical realm.

He's different. He's not an average man. And that matters because the trial he went through is not an average trial either.

And he was a recipient of that. And let's think for a moment. In a way, four major trials Job had to go through.

There's probably more, but I think of four things. Two of them right here in the introduction are very clear. But the first is what? He lost all of his wealth and his children.

I mean, messenger comes. His wealth is just getting taken from before his eyes. And then his firstborn, they were at the firstborn's house on his day.

Maybe referring to the day of his birth. And they were celebrating the birth of the firstborn. And the winds hit all four pillars of the house and it collapses and all ten of his children die.

So financially, he loses everything. Just like that, and he loses his ten children. That's a pretty major hit.

And then you find in chapter 2, at the end of chapter 1, verse 20, Job's response after the first trial. Job arose and he tore his robe. He shaved his head.

He fell on the ground and he worshiped. I mean, it's incredible. If that wasn't in the Bible and you read what the man went through, you'd have a hard time putting that as his response.

You'd have a hard time writing that down. God writes it down for us right here. He worshiped and he said, naked I came from my mother's womb.

Naked shall I return. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

And in all this, Job did not sin or charge God with wrong. Now apparently, some time elapses. Not a lot of time.

Some time happens and then he's got the second big thing here. Chapter 2, again there was a day. And we have this thing repeated where Satan is there before the Lord and the Lord mentions Job and the Lord says about Job at the end of verse 3, He says, He still holds fast His integrity although you incited Me against Him to destroy Him without reason.

He says, well, let me at His body. And that's going to be something where He'll finally curse you to your face. I mean, that's what Satan wanted.

Satan wanted Job to curse God. To blaspheme the Lord. So Job's lost all his wealth, his children, and now he loses his health.

Loses his health. And his response in v. 10, he said to his wife who just told him you should curse God and die. He says in v. 10 to her, you speak as one of the foolish women would speak.

Shall we not receive good from God? And shall we not receive evil? And in all of this, Job did not sin with his lips. I'd say the next two big trials, number one, he gets put at the hands of bad counselors. And that's a trial.

And it messes him up throughout the book in different areas. That's the third trial. And then the fourth trial, which you could say is the hardest trial of the entire book for Job.

I would say it's worse than losing your family. It's worse than all these things. And it's the trial of not having a felt sense of the presence of God in your life.

And Job says that throughout the letter. He can't find God. That is a very severe trial.

So Job's initial response here is glorious. I mean, it is. This is how you want to respond if you were to go through this.

You would want to worship God. You'd want to acknowledge the Lord's control that He can take and give and do what He pleases. And Job, he held his integrity.

Even with a wife. It's interesting how with a wife who's wanting him to curse God, the Lord had just said Job held fast his integrity. Well, then guess what? His wife comes along and says, do you still hold fast your integrity? His wife takes the very statement God had just made, and obviously she didn't know about that, and that's her question to Job.

And her advice to Job is curse God and die, which is the exact thing that the devil wanted to happen. And his wife is being the devil's mouthpiece. She's one of the bad counselors that he is facing in the midst of this severe trial.

And it's amazing, Job's response is you speak like a foolish woman. Oh, if Adam would have responded like that in the garden. Right? He didn't.

He could have. Adam didn't. Job here, he doesn't give in to what the woman, what his wife puts forward to him.

So, the Lord says in 2.3, we read that, it says, destroy him without reason. Now that doesn't mean God didn't have a reason. Alright? There wasn't a clear cause put forward to Job by which all of this happened.

But the Lord has already put forward a very clear purpose in chapter 1. Look at v. 9. Then Satan answered the Lord and said, does Job fear God for no reason? Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has on every side? You've blessed the work of his hands and his possessions have increased in the land. But, Satan is concluding something here, if you stretch out your hand and touch him, all that he has, he will curse you to your face. It's after that that the Lord allows the devil to wreak havoc on Job's life.

And God allows it as a divine demonstration that His creature is going to serve Him and not curse Him even if He loses all things physical. Because Satan wants to think that our faith is so pathetic that if we lose our families, if we lose our health, if we lose our wealth, that we'll deny Christ. That we'll deny the Lord.

The devil wants that to be the case, but Job is an example to us that a creature is trusting God not for things. Right? Amen? Is your service to the Lord this morning primarily for what God can give you in the physical realm? Now look, we've got to guard our hearts, right? That can creep into the heart at times. So then Job's friends arrive.

Job 3, they heard of all this evil that had come upon him, and they wanted to come and meet. The end of v. 11, they made an appointment together to come to show Job what? Sympathy and comfort. How good did they do? But you know what? That was their desire.

And isn't it interesting? They got there, and did they walk in the door and sit down and start opening up the book and saying a lot of things? What did they do? They sat for seven days. Some tragedy happens in our church. You come on prayer meeting.

Wednesday night, you see someone over there they're in grief. You sit in your chair for seven days all the way until next week without saying a single word. That's what happened.

His counselors waited seven days. And their heart's desire was to show him sympathy. And comfort him.

It didn't turn out right. And don't miss this. We're going to find out, and this is an important theme throughout my message.

You know why their counsel was bad? Because they didn't know God accurately. They didn't have proper theology. They didn't have proper doctrine.

And that affects. If you view the world in a certain way like his friends did, it will affect how you counsel someone. Right? So doctrine really matters.

And Job, later in the letter, he calls them, he says in 16.2, he said they were miserable comforters, are you all? I don't want anyone to say that about me when I come to counsel them. With what the Siglers have

gone through recently, when we went initially to visit Christina, I'm thinking about Job in silence and sitting there. What's the right approach? I'm thinking about I don't want to be a miserable comforter to this person who's just suffered the loss of her husband.

Because if I am, I could actually not provide sympathy and comfort, but I could actually drive the person into depression. So, his suffering was very, very great. It says right there at the end, v. 13 of chapter 2, it says his suffering was very great.

Very great. Now, a lot of people, they stop right here in Job. They read chapter 1, they read chapter 2, and it's glorious, it's amazing, and they pull back.

What happened at the end of those seven days? Were his friends the first to speak? Did his friends speak up? V. 13, no one spoke a word? And then, chapter 3, after this, Job opened his mouth. So Job spoke up. He took initiative.

What does Job say? Does he say, blessed be the name of the Lord? Does he say, the Lord has given and the Lord has taken away? He says, curse the day of my birth. Now, he's not cursing God. Throughout the letter, he has faith in the Lord, though struggling at different points.

He curses the day of his birth. And if you read the entirety of chapter 3, verse 11, why did I not die at birth? 12, why did the knees receive me? It's like, why even put me on the knee? Why even nurse me? Why didn't He just let me fall on the ground and die? Verse 16, he's having some self-pity here. Or why was I not as a hidden, stillborn child? It's like, why didn't I die? Verse 23, why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, whom God has hedged in? See, his way is hidden.

He feels hidden. He doesn't fully understand. He doesn't fully comprehend what all is happening here.

Okay, now, flip to the end real briefly. Let's look at chapter 40. If you're a new Christian and you haven't read the entirety of Job, I encourage you, you can go to YouTube, just type Job ESV Dramatized Bible, and you have your Bible open and you can listen to the dramatized version.

It takes two hours to go through it. You can do the whole book in one setting and you're going to notice connections in things that you would not if you're reading just a few chapters here and there. But at the end, the Lord answers Job 38, verse 1, out of the whirlwind.

But what I want to look at is in 40. Look at what the Lord says to Job in 40, verse 2. And this is helpful because God's assessment at the end helps interpret what all happens throughout the letter. Right? Because you can hop in the letter and you think, is this good what the person is saying? Is this bad what they're saying? How do I interpret that? Well, we can find the key here at the end.

Shall a fault finder contend with the Almighty? Who argues with God? Let him answer it. Job responds. Then Job answered the Lord and said, behold, I'm a small account.

What shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth. I've spoken once. I will not answer.

Twice, I'm not going to proceed. Any further. And then he goes on, verse 8, the Lord again answers Job, and He says, will you even put Me in the wrong? Will you condemn Me that you may be right? What did Craig just teach on last Sunday? Making righteous judgments.

How we could have a log in our eye. And the Lord God Almighty looks at Job. He calls him a fault finder.

He says, are you going to even put Me in the wrong? So throughout this letter in different points, Job is wrongly assessing God. He's wrongly saying things about the Lord. Even though initially he didn't charge God with wrong, according to God at the end, there are things throughout the letter which Job said that he should not have said.

He should not have said. And his desire for Him to be right caused him even to put God in the wrong. Then he says it in 42, verse 3. Well, maybe just read those verses.

Verse 1, then Job answered the Lord and said, I know that You can do all things, that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. And then these are in quotes here. Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge? That's quoting 38 too.

And then Job says, therefore, I uttered what I did not understand. It seems too wonderful for me. I didn't know.

I didn't understand. I did not know. And then he quotes again, Herein I will speak, I will question you, and make it known to me.

Job, I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you, and therefore I despise myself, and I repent in dust and ashes. So at the end of the letter, who pulls the log out of Job's eye? God. God does.

If the counselors can't get the log out, then God will come and He will deal with us, right? He has children. He deals with us. He loves us.

So, Job didn't understand God. And here's something to think about. I'm sure many of you have a problem with our government right now, right? Does anyone have a problem with anything the government is doing? Is there anything you could find fault with about how the government is being run right now? No? Zeke says no.

There's probably a lot. And I probably know of a lot more things I could think about if I watched the news more, or probably if I read the documents, not the news, because the news can be biased one way or the other. But you hear people complaining about the government, right? Their control.

Well, guess what? Job had a problem with someone running their government. God. He had some issues with how God ran his government.

And as one said, he entered into a malpractice lawsuit accusing the Almighty of error. You know, the doctor, they messed up on a surgery, and so you come back and you sue them. Well, here, Job, in some sense, he's finding fault with God and something is not right.

And he's accusing God of that in order to even make himself appear right. That's according to the Lord's own description of what all happens throughout the letter. So that's incredible.

And think, why was the log in Job's eye? What was missing in his life? I did not what? I did not know and I did not understand. Isn't it interesting? Ignorance of who God is. Bad theology.

Bad doctrine. Incomplete doctrine. It affects you.

It affects how you go through a trial. It affected how the counselors dealt with Job. And you could say, well, what did Job not know already? I mean, he said, I did not know, I did not understand, and then he makes this statement.

He says right there that God can do all things and no purpose of His can be thwarted. Well, didn't he already know that? Because he started the letter by saying the Lord gave and He took away and should we not receive both evil from God and good from God? So it seems like Job had some sort of grasp on the sovereignty of God. Was something missing? Something? Well, what even happened in the first place? God allowed evil upon a righteous man.

Not just any, the most righteous man alive, and not just any evil, but absolute calamity stripping everything away from him except his wife, who he might have been better off without. And I don't say that to joke, but it's like if she was gone, what a discouragement for your wife to be telling you to curse God and die. Or for your husband, women.

You might have a husband. It's flipped around when the trial comes. But the Lord, He never revealed the purpose to the man.

He reveals it to us. One of the purposes is revealed right in the intro. But even in the end, when God is speaking to Job in a whirlwind, it's the perfect opportunity to explain what we know from the beginning already about one of the purposes at least of God giving a divine demonstration that the one who's trusting in Him is not serving Him because of the physical possessions that they might have.

But God doesn't let Job in on that. Can God do that? Can God use evil for His purposes? Can God do something in your life without revealing to you a clear reason? Can He even let evil come upon the most righteous man? Can God use evil and not reveal the purpose? Yeah, He absolutely can. It makes you think about Joseph, right? It's believed that Job, this is a lot earlier than say, Joseph.

It's not like Job knew about this. What part of the Word of God did he have? If any physical copy? Or if all he had was spoken word like he had at the end of the letter? We can't be certain on that. But look what it says in Genesis.

Listen to this. This is Joseph after years, years of serious trial. Being sold by his brothers.

Being a slave. Being falsely accused of rape. Genesis 50-20, As for you, you meant evil against Me.

But God meant that evil for good. Now, the verse could stop there and that is enough. But you know what Joseph goes on to say? He gets to say something that in many ways Job did not get to say.

Joseph says, for good, to bring it about that many should be kept alive as they are today. Joseph knew what was one of the ultimate things behind all the evil on his life. It was that many lives would be saved in the end from the famine.

And it's all building up to that point throughout his whole life. And he gets in on it. Job doesn't.

Did God mistreat Job and treat Joseph correctly? No, He treated them both correctly. It's not either or. But Job, who believed in God's sovereignty, maybe he had not arrived at this point yet of realizing God's use of evil or the thing of the fact that you aren't always going to see the purpose behind what God is doing.

And Job's friends were no help. Job's friends thought that Job had done evil and thus evil came upon him and they recorded bitter accusations against him. They assumed in any situation if evil fell upon you, it meant that you had sinned.

They had this idea, it appears through the letter, that the Lord rules in a simple way of one plus one equals two. You do good, you're rewarded. You do evil, you're going to suffer.

His friends continue to show that mindset throughout the Bible. And that affects, not the Bible, throughout Job, and that affects their ability to speak accurately and correctly to him. They have a wrong idea of who God is.

And all this makes you think of Romans 9. But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, why have you made me like this? Right? Now, Job through the letter does wrestle with God on the reason why, and there's a place to do that. But in the end, we've got to have a resignation. So the book of Job does not end by giving a definite answer to the righteous suffering.

At least for Job's sake, it seems. But God's point to Job was not to clearly communicate this was all the intricate design behind the trial. But His point to Job in the end was look how powerful I am.

Look how great I am. And what's Job's response? After the Lord goes through all these things in nature, and He lets Job know that yes, even these things in nature, I have supreme control over. Job looks at it and he says, you can do whatever you please.

You're God. I know you can do all things. No purpose of yours can be thwarted.

What is His purpose? Whatever it is, it's not going to get thwarted. Whether you know about it or not, God's going to fulfill it. God's going to make it happen.

This should help us in that God is in control even when things seem so out of order. Don't interpret a lack of order as God being disinterested and God not being in control even if evil is involved in it. Okay, now let's go to chapter 23.

We'll turn in chapter 23. Throughout this letter, Job wanted to know the why. At one point, he said, why did you bring me out of the womb? At another point, he said, why do you contend against me? Job was wrestling throughout this.

Again, we're not helping. In 1919, he said that his closest friends, they despised him. And those who loved him, they turned against him.

But even in all of that, did Job throw in the towel? No. He didn't. Think of that.

That's all the more a divine demonstration of how God can get one man through a trial when his wife's against him, his counselors are against him, and he's lost everything. Who's here for Job? Elihu, some of the things he shared, one could say he was helping Job. But chapter 23.

This is kind of in the middle. Things are starting to get better. You can't just read this chapter and take everything here as something you can quote and that's completely accurate.

Not accurate, but we have to interpret it correctly. But let's read this. Job answered and said, today also my complaint is bitter, and my hand is heavy on account of my groaning.

Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat. I would lay my case before him. I would fill my mouth with arguments.

I would know what he would answer me. And I would understand what he would say to me. Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power? No, he would pay attention to me.

There an upright man could argue with him. I would be acquitted forever by my judge. Verse 8, behold, I go forward.

He's not there. I go backward. I don't perceive him.

On the left hand, when he's working, I don't behold him. He turns to the right. I don't see him.

But, he knows the way that I take. When he has tried me, I shall come out as gold. My foot is held fast to his steps.

I have kept his way. I have not turned aside. I have not departed from the commandments of his lips.

I've treasured the words of his mouth more than my portion of food. But he is unchangeable. Who can turn him back? What he desires, that he does.

For he will complete what he has appointed for me. And many such things are in his mind. Therefore, I am terrified at his presence.

When I consider, I am in dread of him. God has made my heart faint. The Almighty has terrified me.

Yet, I am not silenced because of the darkness, nor because the darkness covers my face. Now, we're going to learn six things from him here briefly. But do we have any reason to believe that we should be able to go and learn something from Job throughout this letter? What's a biblical reason? A verse in the New Testament that gives us precedent to go here and observe something from Job.

That's a good verse, but a specific verse. Or more specific. James 5? James 5.11? Right? It says here, you have heard of what? The steadfastness of Job.

These people in the New Testament, he's assuming they've heard about Job. And the specific thing that he puts right there about Job is that Job was steadfast. And just in context there, he's talking about patience and suffering.

And so right there, he looks at Job and he says that is an example of a man who was steadfast. So that New Testament author is helping us to interpret part of what's going on throughout Job is you have an example of a man being steadfast. Not perfectly.

Obviously not, because God Himself rebukes Job for different things. But overall, you've got a man who is being steadfast in the midst. As James 1 says, a very, very fiery trial.

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast when under trial. For when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to all those who love Him. And we're going to find here, Job loved God.

Job loved God. Okay, so you saw there where I get the idea of darkness, right? Verse 17. He says, thick darkness covers my face.

Thick darkness covers my face. And then you get that sense from verse 8 and 9. He goes forward. He's not He.

Meaning God isn't there. Backward. I don't perceive Him.

I don't behold Him. I don't see Him. I don't know where to go to pray to Him.

I have no sense of His presence. I feel thick darkness. That's Job right here.

He's in the midst of thick darkness. Depression, you could say. The Bible doesn't really use that word, but that could describe this.

And what's his response? What's his response in all of this? Well, let's look at six things. And again, accurate theology helps one respond under suffering. I want to keep mentioning that.

Imagine how would Job's friends have been able to counsel him if they knew verses like, through much tribulation we must enter the Kingdom of God. Or if they knew verses like 1 Peter 4.12. Beloved, do not be surprised. It's a fiery trial that comes upon you to test you as though something strange were happening to you.

But rejoice. His friends are telling him to rejoice. What are they telling him? Their understanding is evil happened to you, that means you have sin in your life, and so they're telling him repent.

What a difference if his counselors would have been there saying rejoice! Instead, they're saying repent. Evil's in your life. That automatic conclusion is you must have sinned.

That's wrong. That's bad counsel right here. It's not right.

Now, okay, so, first thing here is this. How to press out of thick darkness. What do we learn from Job? There's at least six things here I want to briefly point out that we can learn.

And the first is this, even on a day with great bitterness, he says that in v. 2, today, how's Job feeling? My complaint is bitter. My hand is heavy on account of my groaning. So he's been groaning so much, his hand is heavy.

And what's the first thing Job says? What does he say in v. 3? What's on his mind? In the midst of darkness? The first thing to get out of thick darkness? Job says right here, O that I knew where to find Him. Job was longing to go before the Lord. Forget about the fact that he's saying he can't find the Lord.

Think about the fact that that was his desire. He's in the midst of suffering. His prime thing isn't being pulled out of the suffering.

His prime thing is finding God in the midst of it. That's what he wants. He's going in all directions and his concern is beholding the Lord and having some sense of God's presence on his life.

That's what he's longing for here. So even though the lights are out, you could say, where you can't find God, Job is seeking the Lord. He even says in v. 17, he says I'm not silenced because of the darkness.

The worst thing you could do in the midst of darkness is stop seeking to find where the Lord is and stop praying to Him. So dark, I guess I should just be quiet. And stop calling out to the Lord.

And stop searching for the Lord. That's not what Job did. He's wanting to go before the Lord.

He's wanting to find the Lord. And then he even gives some reasons why he wants to find the Lord. He says in v. 4, I would lay my case before Him and I would fill my mouth with arguments and I would know that He would answer me.

So you've got to remember, throughout this letter, Job's friends are accusing him of all sorts of things. So in Job's mind, he knows he's lived blameless. And God has said he's lived blameless.

At least there in the beginning, right? And so Job's wanting to find the Lord because the Lord could get in here and mediate and prove his friends wrong and prove that Job is right. And in the end, does that happen? Yeah, it actually does. The Lord says that his friends were in sin and Job has to offer a sacrifice for them.

And the Lord says of Job, he spoke what was right. That doesn't mean everything Job said in the whole book was right. That would be wrong because God clearly corrected Job there in the end.

So even though the lights are out, Job keeps calling. He wants to present a case before the Lord. And there's two things to notice here that I want to point out.

First, he says, you're trying to get at what he's thinking here. It's interesting in v. 5, he says I would know what He would answer me and I would understand what He would say to me. The problem is what happens in the end? Job says I didn't understand and I didn't know.

So here he's thinking he knows what it's going to look like. Forget the fact that Job got it wrong in one aspect. In one aspect, he got it right.

Look what Job says right here. He says at the end, v. 7, and I would be acquitted forever by my judge. Job did get acquitted in the end in some way.

The Lord said you spoke what was right. And the Lord had him go and offer a sacrifice and pray for the counselors. So if you're those counselors, you look at Job and you see, wow, he was on God's side.

We were not. But in another way, you don't want to take all of this and say Job was right. Because he admits in the end he did not understand.

And the way he perceived that case before the Lord was not exactly how it turned out. But commend him for having anything to wrestle with God before the throne rather than just sitting down and quitting. That was not his attitude.

He went before the Lord. He looked at whatever arguments. He could order an argument in prayer.

He's trying to analyze things based on the knowledge and the theology and the doctrine that he has. And his heart's in the right place. He wants to find God.

That's huge. Even though he didn't have it all perfectly figured out right there. So what's the first thing? You want to press out of darkness.

You want to get out of thick darkness. Your attitude should be, I must find Him. And not just I must find Him, but you're thinking about not just finding Him, but you're going to Him and you're praying to Him and

you're putting forth arguments.

And even if some of them end up being wrong in the end, you're bearing your heart before the living God. You're wrestling with Him. You're saying to Him what's on your mind.

And God is very much able to come along and correct anything that was off. And so I would say Job had things here that are right and wrong. He says in v. 6, would He contend with me? Yeah, God did contend with Job.

God did. But Job sought God. So number two.

Number two, the second thing on pressing through thick darkness, and I already kind of hit on this, but we don't want to have a stoic view of Job. We don't want to have some view that he was unaffected. If you just read the first two chapters, you can get this idea that Job just lost everything and it's like he worships God and he says, blessed be the Lord, He gives and takes away, and he just pressed on.

You forget the fact that after seven days of sitting around and thinking, the first words out of his mouth were him cursing the day of his birth. Something happened in that period of seven days. In his thinking, no one is saying anything.

Left to his own thoughts. Left to seeing their tears and whatever their bodies might have been communicating, facial looks, weeping. Something changed in his thinking where his attitude was not the same.

So, why do I mention that? Because look, trials can be tough. Right? I mean, initially finding grace from God in the midst of it, praise God for that. But you've got to go beyond the first week.

You've got to get past the second week. You've got to get past the third week. You've got to get past the fourth week.

I mean, I think about the Siglers right now. I don't think they're here today, but think Christina. She got past the first week onto the second.

What's going to happen? What are we as counselors going to say to her? Are we going to be like Job's counselors and be miserable comforters? Or are we going to be counselors who are going to give comfort that's according to accurate theology and doctrine from the Word of God? So, we do need to realize reality. Trials are tough. Here is the man who's the most blameless man on all the earth who God Himself said there is no one like Him.

And here he is sitting in thick darkness having no felt presence of God. Would you have expected that? Would you have thought when no one's like Him, you must think He must have all this instant access to the Lord and have the felt presence of God 24-7? Not happening here. Now, lest that thought be abused, you don't want to have a too low a view of how you respond in a trial either.

You don't want to have a stoic view where you just assume it's all going to be easy. You don't want to have too low a view where you think it all has to be miserable. Especially in the New Testament, we find truths like Acts 5.41, the disciples rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for Christ's name.

They were beaten and they rejoiced that they were found worthy to suffer for the name of Christ. And so we don't ever want to let the depression of whatever trial we've had in the past be the expected standard

for someone else who's going through that in the present. My experience of how I went through some trial is not something that I've got to place as an expectation on someone else, because what if the way I handled the trial was actually less than what could have been accomplished in the midst of that suffering? We want to believe God can help us.

We don't have to experience thick darkness, especially not us who have a whole Bible. We're not like Job with lacking in that area. So, remember, Job having the thick darkness, in some ways I would say didn't even have to happen if he would have had more of a revelation of God.

Because when he got that revelation from God in the end, that obviously affected how he moved on from there. So a third thing. A third thing is this, and I've kind of already mentioned this throughout, but to press through thick darkness, you have to have a right view of God's sovereignty.

You have to have a right view of God's sovereignty. God's control over all things. Look at v. 10.

Chapter 23. Look what Job says there. But He, even the one who doesn't see Him, right at the end of v. 9, but He knows the way that I take.

I mean, wherever Job is at, he knows God is there. God knows the way that I take. When He's tried me, I shall come out as gold.

And then he says in v. 13, what He desires that He does, v. 14, for He will complete what He appoints for me. Now, this is huge. If you listen to the entire book of Job, you're going to find in chapters earlier, Job was not speaking like this.

Now, was he speaking like this in the beginning? Yeah, I would say he was. The Lord gives and takes away. There's that sense of God is controlling this, God is using this, but then he falls into a sense whether it's because he had a hard time comprehending how God could use evil for His purposes, or whether it was just this issue of what is God's purpose? You just tell me Job's struggle.

But here, in the midst of thick darkness, he's acknowledging the sovereign control of the Lord. You won't get out of the darkness if you don't acknowledge the fact that God knows you're in the darkness and that God even in some way, even if using evil, has allowed you through the means of something else to be in that situation. You've got to acknowledge that.

Job in chapter 9, he had said the Lord made the star constellation, a certain star constellation. Well, in the Lord's rebuke, the Lord, He says to Job, who had made this comment earlier about a star constellation, He looks at Job and He says, well, can you lose it? Can you let those stars move around? God is throughout the letter saying, I didn't just create that. I actually control it.

Job is clearly acknowledging God's creative power, but is he fully bowing to God's controlling power? So yeah, do you accurately acknowledge the sovereign control of God? What a statement. For He will complete what He appoints for me. And many such things are in his mind.

V. 14 And what's Job's response to the sovereignty of God? What's the text say? What impacts Job when he thinks about the fact that God does whatever He desires? Therefore, he is what? Terrified. Terrified. Therefore, God doing whatever He desires, God completing what He appoints, therefore, I'm terrified at His presence when I consider Him.

I'm in dread of Him. God has made my heart faint. The Almighty has terrified me.

Yet, I'm not silenced because of the dark. He's not going to be quiet. He's going to keep seeking the Lord.

Think, if you just lost your ten children, all your property, all finances, it's all stripped away, and you're all the more coming to grips with God's control over all things, and you know He just in a moment can take, you better be terrified. There better be a fear of God. And what was it said in the beginning? What did the Lord say to Job? There is none who... what? Fears God as He does.

That's an admirable quality to have a righteous fear of who God is in your smallness. And so you've got to have the right view of God's sovereignty. You've got to believe He can even use evil to fulfill His purposes.

And even if He doesn't let you in on His purposes like He did Joseph, you must trust Him. We must trust Him. So fourth thing, on pressing through the thick darkness, the fourth thing is how vitally important it is that you must treasure His Word.

You must treasure His Word. Verse 12, I have not departed from the commandments of His lips. I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my portion of food.

Job's in thick darkness. And here he is saying, I've not departed from the commandments of His lips. I've treasured the words of His mouth more than my portion of food.

And he's responding to what his friends said. Look at 22. We haven't looked a lot at his friends here, but look what his friends are advising him to do.

Verse 22, Eliphaz is saying, receive instruction from His mouth. Lay up His words in your heart. And Job is like, I have.

I've been treasuring it more than food. Eliphaz. Oh, Job, don't get impatient there.

Have some patience here. May this righteous indignation. He says he's not departed, meaning presently, but you don't want to miss the fact.

When did Job primarily do the treasuring of God's Word? Was it in the trial or when? Before. When did Joseph create the storehouses? Was it when the famine came upon the land? Oh, he better store it. No.

Same thing with us. The time to memorize the Bible, the time to know the Word of God, the time to have right doctrine is not when you're in the middle of a trial and you're trying to figure out what does God say about this. You want to know it ahead of time.

So that when you get put in the fire, you're able to lay hold of those truths. You're able to believe them right there. So you already want to have something treasured up.

In the past. It's also... Yeah, what did it even have? What did Job have? In Job 22, it assumes 22 what? 16? Some would say this alludes to the flood. Does it? I don't know.

It says there, they were snatched away before their time. Their foundation was washed away. Right? I mean, is that alluding to the flood? The way he operates early on with those sacrifices, it seems very clear this is before the giving of the Mosaic Law.

Whether you want to argue is he an Israelite or is he not an Israelite, it seems like this is pretty early on. My point is this, whatever Job had, it wasn't a lot. Right? And we know at the end of the letter, Job actually gets a word from his mouth.

He actually gets an audible communication from the Lord. And that's how he words that here. He says, I have treasured the words of His mouth.

Well, where do we have the words of God's mouth? Right here. Do you treasure the words of God's mouth? This God-breathed book that has been given to you. Do you treasure it more than your food? More than food.

My portion of food is what Job is saying. Job is saying, look, trial is going to come. My priority is not getting all this food stored up over here in the silo.

My priority is getting the Word of God in my heart. And what happened to Job's storage of food? What happened to the 7,000 sheep? Dead. All dead.

Right? He didn't have any of that left. What did he have left? He had the Word. He had the Word.

Do we view God's Word correctly? Do we view it more important than physical food? Which is ironic because physical food keeps the body alive. Right? If you don't eat, unless you're supernaturally upheld by the Spirit of God, you're going to die. You go on for a long period of time without eating.

But here Job is realizing what's more important is not my physical health, it is my spiritual stability. And so I'm going to treasure the Word. I'm going to trust God that if He feeds the ravens, not like Job knew that verse, but with chapter 38, you imagine he knew God can easily feed me at any point.

I'm going to trust the Lord to provide that. But I'm going to do due diligence to get the Word. What's easier to do? Sit down and eat a meal? Or sit down and memorize some of the Bible? What takes more work? I mean, it's pretty easy to sit there with the fork and the brisket or whatever it is and just pound it right down into your gut.

It takes a lot more work to get the Word stored up inside of you. And I'll tell you this, it makes you think of the Israelites. Did they value God's Word more than food? Most of them, they did not.

It makes you think of the Cretans. It says they were evil beasts and gluttons. It says the Philippians, it says their God was their belly of some of them.

So we've got to learn, man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. Deuteronomy 8, and that's the very verse Christ referred to when He was being tempted by the devil. Did Christ have the Word? Did the Word have the Word stored up? Yes, He did.

Psalms 119, I've stored up Your Word in my heart. Why do you store it up? I don't want to sin against God. I love God more than anything else.

I want to be before Him. So, a trial should make you remember the Word that you've already stored up. And what we don't want to do is set the Scripture memory bar too low in the church.

Right? I've got a chapter here and there. I've got some of it down. Are we doing all we can? Are you and I, individually, doing all we can to hide the Word in our heart? Listen to this.

I think I mentioned this years ago, but a son whose father has written some different books and different things, he said this. He said of his father, he found out, he had to pull this out of his dad. My dad had memorized the entire New Testament, the whole book of Psalms, half of Isaiah, Ecclesiastes, the Son of Solomon, the minor prophets, Ruth, and other select portions of the Old Testament narrative.

That comes to around half the Bible, at least as far as direct memorization is concerned. I then discovered that in order to keep it from fading, he tries to make a daily practice, and who knows where he finds the time, to review six chapters of memorized material every day. Right? Look, I've known people where I would see them, they'd just be memorizing a verse a day.

I mean, a verse a day, that's not too hard, is it? What's hard is the discipline. I'll tell you what, if you knew a famine was coming, a persecution, a suffering, of getting your Bible ripped away from you, being put in a prison and not having a Bible, let's say if any of that were to happen, you'd be sitting there wishing you would have skipped more meals to memorize more of the Word, and have more of it in your heart. And so I know Josh recently made, there's an app called Bible Memory, and he made a group of people memorizing John 15 and John 17.

I mean, that's encouraging to me. Memorize. You know what, if some of you want to memorize the whole book of Romans, and you make a group on that app, and you just start knocking off chapter after chapter, you knock off the whole book of Romans while you're still in your 20s, while your mind is still somewhat like a sponge, you're not going to regret that.

Why not? It just takes time. Right? So that's the fourth thing here. The Word.

Are you already treasuring and storing up the Word? And his friends accuse him he's not. That's the thing. It's like he's getting blasted here.

So, fifth thing. To press out of thick darkness, to press out of the bad counselors and what they're saying, you've got to recognize a specific aspect of God's sovereign control, and Job finally starts to show us he's seeing that here in this chapter, and it's this. God is using the trial to sanctify you that you might come out like gold.

And he says that right there in v. 10. He knows the way I take. When He's tried me, I shall come out as gold.

I'll come out as gold. This is the opposite of 22 v. 4. Look at 22 v. 4. This is Eliphaz again. He says, is it for your fear of Him that He reproves you? Meaning, he's saying it's not that.

It enters into judgment with you. Is not your evil abundant? Whoa, whoa, whoa. He's saying is it for his fear of you that He reproves you? That all this is happening.

Well, what do we find out in the beginning of the book? What did God say? Have you considered My servant Job? And what was one of the characteristics? He was upright, he was blameless, and he fears God. So the very thing he's accusing, he's saying did all this come upon you because you fear God? Yes. If Job didn't fear God, and he wasn't like none other, someone else would have got picked to be a divine demonstration that the one who has faith in God, they're not living for it just because the possessions, they want Him.

So, very ironic again. And Job is actually saying now here, he's saying, well, no, he knows the way I take, and he's actually trying me that I might come out as gold. That there might be some greater being set apart, greater sanctification, as you could say, that's going to happen in his life.

And his friends are saying it's because you're evil that this has happened. Imagine that outlook. You're suffering and someone's saying it's because you did evil, and then someone else is saying God's going to make you more like Christ.

Which one would you want to hear? Look, do some people suffer because they have done evil? Yeah. There's a lot of people doing evil who don't ever suffer in this life. They're going to suffer the wrath of God and hell for all of eternity.

So don't envy the wicked. So, we see progress here. Job's no longer asking to die.

Right? He sees he's growing through this. He sees, verse 9 here in chapter 23, on the left hand, he said he didn't behold Him, but look what Job says on the left hand when he's working. Job realizes God is working.

God is doing something. I don't behold Him. You might not behold the Lord coming to prune you.

And you might be sitting there and all of a sudden, your right arm gets pruned right off of the vine. And all of a sudden, you got pruned. What happened? God's working.

You get disciplined. Hebrews 12, God's working. That you might share in His holiness.

Again, these are truths that we know in a far better light than compared to what Job had. You should thank God that we are those upon whom the end of the ages have come and we have the whole canon of Scripture. I mean, imagine being back there and having just a little bit.

That could be so much more difficult. We've got this complete revelation. But this shows us how far Job has come.

In chapter 9, there's like four parallels between chapter 9 and 23. In chapter 9, he says, I don't perceive Him. In chapter 23, he says, I don't perceive Him.

In chapter 9, he says, He snatches away. Who can turn Him back? Who will say to Him, what are You doing? In chapter 23, he says, Who can turn Him back? Whatever He desires that He does. And in chapter 9, he had said, He multiplies my wounds without cause.

Does Job say that here in chapter 23? No, he's in a sense saying, He multiplies my wounds to make me pure as gold. His perspective is changing here. So that's the fifth thing.

You want to get out of thick darkness? You've got to recognize God's going to do something in that trial to make you as pure as gold, more purified in the midst of the trial. So the sixth thing, the last thing here on how to press out of darkness. We find it in v. 11.

He says, my foot held fast to His steps. I've kept His way and I've not turned aside. Don't sin.

You want to get out of thick darkness? Don't sin in the darkness. And don't be sinning prior to going into the darkness. And his friends are accusing him that he has 22-6.

They say here, you've exacted pledges from your brothers for nothing. You stripped the naked of their clothing. You didn't give water to one who's weary.

You didn't even feed the hungry. I mean, they're just blasting him. You sent widows away empty.

It's like, oh! They're just hitting Job with all of that. Job's saying in response to Eliphaz, he is saying I've not departed from the commands of His lips. I've kept His way.

Brother, sister, I'll tell you, if you're going through thick darkness and you start giving in to sin, oh, it's going to make it all the harder to get out of that darkness. It's going to make all the more opportunity for the devil to lay all sorts of accusations on you. It's going to make the darkness even thicker.

Be righteous prior to the trial and in the midst of the trial. Even what you cannot understand, seek to honor God. Honor God.

So how are you living before you enter into deep darkness? How are you and I living now? At any moment, any of us, just like our sister Christina has gone through, just like some others have gone through, you could enter into a deep trial. How was Evan living prior to his wife divorcing him? Right? How much word did he treasure in his heart so that when the trial comes, you don't sin against God? A couple thoughts right here to conclude. One of the main things I'm burdened for is I want to argue that you should value the Word of God more than you do.

Because as you value the Word, as you memorize the Word, what happens? You know who God is. And when you know who God is, you can discern when bad counselors come and not fall into the thick darkness part of which is based on what they said. And then you yourself will be competent to counsel others.

We've got to know the Word because we've got to know God. We've got to know who He is. So remember, your trial, it's refining you.

1 Peter gives us greater light on this. It says, "...Bow for a little while if necessary. You've been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire..." And that's going to be found to result in that which is going to honor the Lord.

Tested by fire. We've got to rejoice. Peter says when the fiery trial comes, rejoice.

Yes, if you had sin, repent of that sin, right? But Job, there was nothing that brought it about that was sin in his life, so being told to repent was not overly helpful. He should have been told to rejoice. And if they had more accurate theology, he would have been greatly helped.

Think of Job. In the end, what did he get? Did he get all the stuff back? He actually got ten kids again. He had ten and he gets ten more.

Is the whole point of God's mercy and compassion that James 5 says we see in Job, is it about the fact that he got the stuff back? No, that's not what it's all about. It's about God's patient dealing with Job as Job is being steadfast. And the fact that Job got anything in the end, it's not because of his obedience.

That would fall into the idea that his friends were teaching that was wrong. It wasn't like God is looking, if you obey Me and you persevere through the trial, then I'll give you your ten kids back. That's wrong.

That was just a gift from God. He didn't owe it to Job to give him anything after that. But the bigger thing here is this, that Job in the beginning with ten kids and all that stuff, he's a far different man in the end.

And he's a far different man in what way? He understood who God is more. He went through all of that, and in the end, he puts his hand on his mouth. His understanding and knowledge are greater, and he's far better off because of it.

That's how we want our trials to end with us knowing who God is more. What does your life say? God uses trials to prove truths about Himself. Right? To Satan, to angels, to the world.

Job didn't curse God. We don't want to curse God. And this idea is throughout the New Testament.

Philippians 1.28 Do not be frightened in anything by your opponents. Why not? Why should we not be afraid? For it is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation and that from God. You find it in 1 Peter 3. The woman who without a word wins her husband by her pure conduct.

Her life communicates something. The person not afraid, it communicates something. Job's life communicated something to Satan and ultimately to those who watch on.

Are you suffering? Maybe you can't understand. Well, one thing you want to understand is God does whatever He pleases. And whether He lets you in on all the ins and the outs of why you're in that specific trial, you just want to be able to worship Him and trust Him.

Job pressed on in faith. Although there was no material proof of God's mercy. Which son died? Firstborn.

On what day? The kid would have their own day. Some would say it was a birthday. Basically, the day they were born and that's when they had the celebration.

His firstborn, the house collapsed on the day of his firstborn. Who else lost a firstborn child later on? Pharaoh. Pharaoh lost his firstborn.

That was a judgment of Almighty God. Right? If that had happened at this point, you could easily imagine someone taking that and saying, look at that example. They died.

And so, that's why your son died too. It's a judgment of God. Well, I would say like Jesus says, unless you repent, you're going to perish.

No matter what led to that tower falling and those people dying, all men, unless they repent, they're going to perish unless you come to Christ. Have you ever said, I despise myself, and put your hand over your mouth, and you stop arguing with God about how righteous you are, and you step back and realize, I am nothing apart from Christ. I need Christ.

You know, true repentance is in a way despising yourself. You look at all self is and you recognize it's nothing but garbage and you need a Redeemer. And Christ is willing to come to forgive.

Think of this, the greatest good that ever happened involved evil men bringing it about. Acts 2.23, this Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. If God did not have control and have involvement in allowing evil men to do evil things, we would not have the greatest act of love that has ever happened.

And Christ's death on that cross. So how do you react in thick darkness? How do you react when you don't feel the presence of God? Could it be said of you? We heard of the steadfastness of Jonathan. We heard of the steadfastness of David.

We heard about it. We heard about that trial they went through and they trusted the Lord even in thick darkness. They treasured the Word.

They wanted to find Him in prayer. They brought arguments to God in prayer. They were living a righteous life.

They believed the Lord. Charles Spurgeon said this, he said, God knoweth the way you take. I will ask you first, do you know your own way? And Job did.

Job kept referring to his blamelessness throughout the letter. He knew. He knew how he had lived prior to the trial.

Spurgeon goes on, secondly, is it a comfort to you that God knows your way? Some people, they don't want God to know their way. You can't hide from the Lord. Your sin.

God sees your sin. God sees it. He can't have evil before His eyes.

See is the best word. He's aware of even an idle word that is spoken on a corner of a rooftop. Wherever it is, He knows it.

Spurgeon goes on, thirdly, are you tried in the way? And if so, fourthly, have you confidence in God as to the result of that trial? Can you say with Job when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold? Well, that's all I have. Let's pray. Father, Lord, we thank You that You've given us so much truth.

Lord, You've given us, Lord, just an incredible treasure right here on our Bibles. It's absolutely amazing. Lord, seeing what Job went through and if he would have had more light, if he would have had the New Testament, Lord, it would have helped in so many different areas.

But he didn't, and Lord, we do. Lord, to whom much is given, much is required. Would You help us, Lord, to treasure the Word in our hearts? I pray, Lord, You would put upon different people, Lord, even in my own heart, as I feel like You've been doing, Lord, just a greater zeal to memorize Your Word, to hide it, to treasure it.

Lord, that we'd have people here with storehouses of different books of the Bible memorized. Lord, that they'd be able to go and benefit others who are suffering with the rich treasures of Your Word and then in their own suffering, they'd be able to treasure the Word. Lord, help us to not depart from Your commandments.

Lord, help us to fear You. Lord, You know the way that we take. You know what tomorrow will bring.

We do not. And so, Lord, we put our hand on our mouth and say, You may do whatever You please. And yet, Lord, You ask us to pray, and we pray that You'd be pleased to save the lost, to bring people to Christ, to help those in thick darkness who are Your children to come out of that darkness and find a great sense of Your presence in the light.

Pray these things in Jesus' name, amen.

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