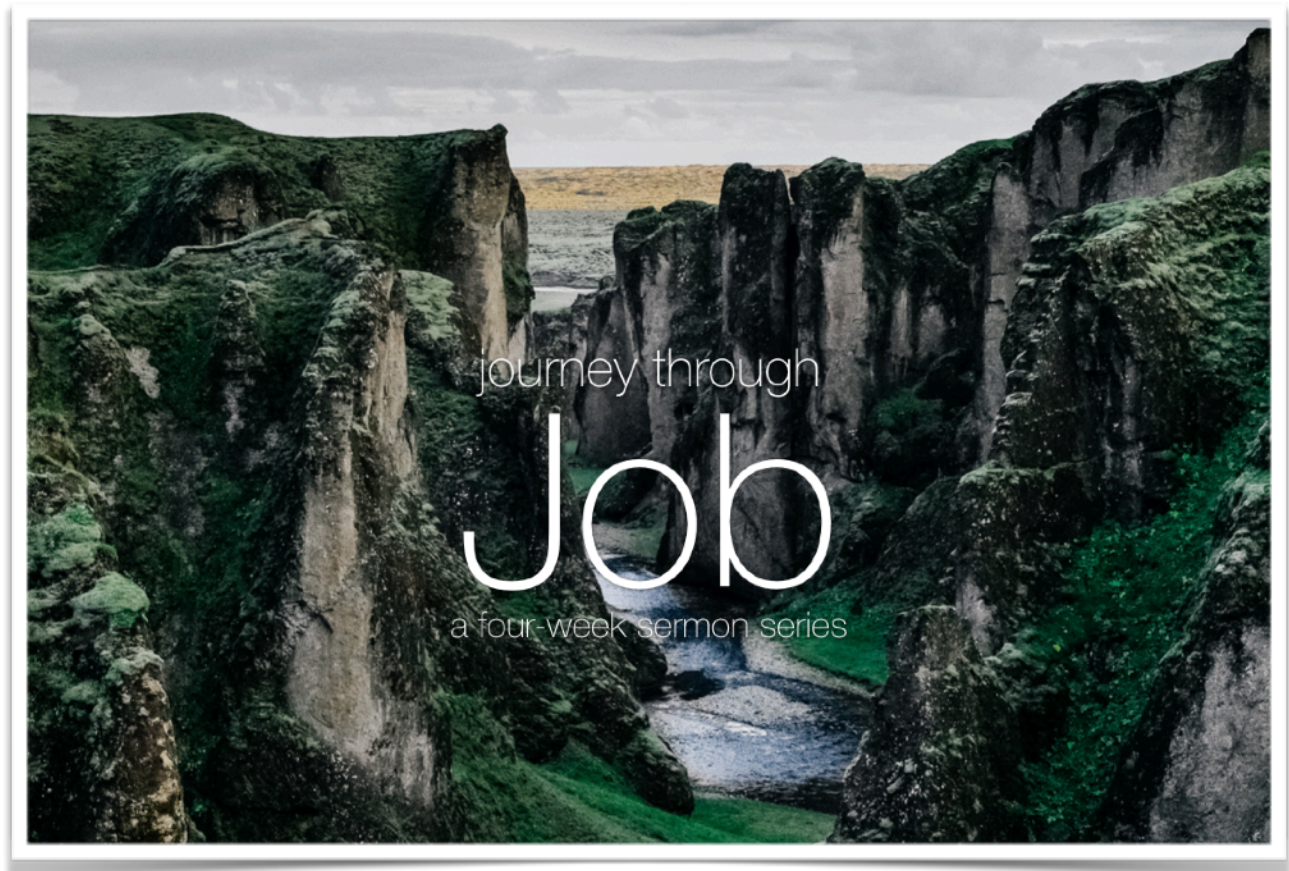


Hope Christian Church
D. Todd Cravens
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Sermon Series: *Journey Through Job*



Blessed Be Yahweh, Who Gives & Takes

Introduction

Over the next four weeks we will **Journey Through Job**. I invite you to read through this book with me over the next 25 days. If you read 1.7 chapters each day, then you'll finish by the end of the month.

I have three aims this morning: 1) to cultivate delight in the sovereignty of God; 2) to lead us to cherish God more than our people & our possessions; and 3) to help you worship Him whether he gives or takes.

The author of the book is unknown, but it was unquestionably accepted into the Jewish canon.¹ The date is difficult to determine, but Job's circumstances seem very similar to that of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob. Thus it is likely the oldest book in the Bible.

Is Job Historical or Fictional?

Some have doubted that Job was a real historical person and that this book describes actual events. Is Job historical? God later speaks of Job as a real person to the prophet Ezekiel.² In announcing his judgment against Israel, God said that he would not relent even if Noah, Job, and Daniel were living in the land. So God, to Ezekiel, speaks of Job as a real, historical person.

James, the brother of Jesus, writes of Job as a real, historical person.

James 5:11 (ESV)

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

James has no doubt that Job was a real, historical person. The church throughout history has not doubted the historicity of Job. If the prophet Ezekiel wrote of Job as a real, historical person, and God spoke of Job as a real, historical person, James did the same, and the church has understood Job to be an actual, historical person, then I will join them in reading the book of Job as recording actual events which unfolded in history in the life of man named Job, who actually lived.

The Purpose of Job

James helps us understand the purpose of the book of Job. It is intended to keep you **steadfast through seasons of suffering**. The book of Job was written to help you keep your faith in God through periods of pain. It was written to teach us that Yahweh, the God of Israel, the Father who sent Jesus, is **Sovereign over suffering and worthy of your worship, because through our suffering God intends to display the glory of his mercy & compassion**.

Last week I preached a sermon which essentially said that the goal of all of life is to glorify God in everything we do, whether we are eating, working, or whatever we are doing. All of life should be aimed at glorifying God. If this is true, then can we glorify God through our suffering?

¹ Elmer B. Smick, "[Job](#)," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 853.

² Ez. 14:14, 20.

There are some preachers, theologians, and commentators who will tell you that it is never God's will that you suffer. A well-known commentator from the last century, William Barkley, wrote this in his book called *A Spiritual Autobiography*.

I believe that pain and suffering are never the will of God for his children. I cannot conceive that it is the will of God that anyone should be run over by a driver under the influence of drink or that a young mother should die of leukemia or that someone in the first flush of youth should face increasingly helplessness of arteriosclerosis.

This is astounding to me because the Bible clearly says the opposite. It was the will of God that his only Son suffer for the sins of everyone who would trust in him.

Isaiah 53:10 (ESV)

Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him;

Paul very plainly teaches us that if you desire to live a holy life, then you will suffer for it and it is patently clear that we are called by God to live holy lives.

2 Timothy 3:12 (ESV)

Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,

Recall the words Jesus spoke about Paul.

Acts 9:16 (ESV)

"For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."

Jesus said the same about all who would follow him.

John 15:20 (ESV)

"Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you."

The book of Job is written to help you stand up under suffering. We won't always know the reasons behind the suffering we will endure, but this book will help you understand how to faithfully endure through suffering.

Furthermore, it was written to keep us from assuming we know all the reasons for the suffering that we must endure, to keep us from wrongfully condemning those who do suffer, and to teach us that it is often through suffering that God reveals himself most powerfully to us, namely that he is **compassionate** and **merciful**.

The end of book details Job's personal encounter with God that is unlike anything else in Scripture. God reveals himself to his children through suffering in ways that demonstrate that

experiencing his presence is sweeter than experiencing a life free from pain. God intends to sustain you *through* all suffering, not deliver you *from* all suffering. This was the message this Paul preached. He went from church to church,

Acts 14:22 (ESV)

strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

This is the purpose of the book of Job, **to help you continue in the faith** by preparing you to *rightly endure suffering*. Suffering will certainly come to each of us at some point in our lives. The question is, will we be ready for it? Will we endure it and keep our faith or will we think God is against us and run from him? Will we remain confident that God is working our good through suffering or will we abandon him and assume that we know better than he how to run the world? Will we through suffering draw near to God through Jesus, who suffered, or will we because of suffering run far from God?

Another purpose of this book is to teach us that not all suffering is a direct result of sin. Some suffering we endure will come about because of our sin. But there is no one to one correlation between sin and suffering in our lives. Job will teach us this.

Lastly, it is possible to glorify God through suffering. The disciples once came across an adult man who had been born blind. They asked Jesus,

John 9:2 (ESV)

And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

Jesus responded,

John 9:3 (ESV)

"It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him."

Jesus then displayed the glory of God by healing this man and opening his eyes. This man had endured years of suffering from the difficulty of living in darkness, not because he was being punished for his sins or for the sins of his parents, but because God has chosen to display his glory through him by healing him at that moment. All suffering does not come into our lives because of our sin or because God is against us. *Sometimes we suffer in order to display the supremacy of God over a life of free from suffering*. Sometimes we suffer because of our sin, but other times we suffer to display the glory of God. Job will help us see this.

This chapter breaks into three parts; 1) in the first, Job's character is revealed, 2) a heavenly conversation is revealed, and 3) lastly, Job's response is revealed.

Job's Character Revealed (1:1-5)

The opening five verses reveal to us Job's character. In them, we are given necessary information about Job and what kind of man he is.

Job 1:1-5 (ESV)

1 *There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.* 2 *There were born to him seven sons and three daughters.* 3 *He possessed 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 female donkeys, and very many servants, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the east.* 4 *His sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one on his day, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.* 5 *And when the days of the feast had run their course, Job would send and consecrate them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, "It may be that my children have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did continually.³*

The opening verse tells us that Job lived in the land of Uz, which was east of Palestine in southern Israel, overlapping with the land of Edom.⁴

Job is a Godly Man

Job's character is of utmost importance. It is the first fact mentioned about him. He was **"blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil"** (1:1). These same words are later repeated by God himself as he described Job (1:8).

Being **"blameless and upright"** does not mean that Job was sinless, as we shall see as we work our way through the book (13:26; 14:16-17). However, it means he dealt properly with his sin. He was quick to repent and be reconciled to God. He **feared** disobeying and offending **God** and he **turned away from evil**. When he saw evil coming, he went the other way. He avoided evil. He was a man who was mindful that his actions were seen by God and that nothing he did escaped his knowledge. Job was a man of integrity who lived his life always to please his good God.



Next we're told that Job was blessed with a large family. He has seven sons and three daughters. His family is not only large, but also very close. His children enjoy one another's company. The boys each take turns hosting family feasts. It is also noteworthy that they invite their three sisters "to eat and drink with them" (v.4), and not to serve them. This family enjoys being together and they do it on a regular basis.

³ Just putting in a footnote to start formatting

⁴ See also Lam. 4:21.

Job is a Faithful Father

Job is also a faithful father. He is daily concerned about the spiritual well-being of his children. He is mindful that parties can often lead to regrets on the day after. Job would **wake up early** on the day after the feast was over and offer sacrifices on behalf of children. He would forego sleep in order to get up early in the morning and talk to God on behalf of his sons and daughters.

He feared that one of them may have sinned. Maybe one of them **cursed God secretly, in their heart**. In response, Job was up early praying and offering sacrifices to God, atoning for the sins of his children. **Job did this continually**. Job was a faithful father. He was a priestly father. Job was a godly man, completely aware that God knows the secret thoughts of all men and he continually sought to atone for the secret sins of his children. Job feared God and turned away from evil.

Job Was a Wealthy Man

Job was also a very wealthy man. In fact, he was the wealthiest man in the east (v.3). His farm was huge. He had 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen (two make a yoke so that's 1,000 oxen), 500 donkeys, and "very many servants" to take care of all these animals. Job owned his own zoo and nature preserve. With that many sheep he probably owned a small textile mill as well. Job was incredibly rich. He was the richest man in the region. However, despite his wealth, *he was more concerned about his God and the spiritual condition of his children than he was about his money*. Job was a unique man from many vantage points. He was both righteous and rich and was able to keep those two things in their proper balance.

God's Conversation Revealed (1:6-12)

The next six verses reveal a conversation that takes place in the throne room of God. God is pulling back the veil for us that separates the temporal from the eternal. He is allowing us to see into the kingdom in a way that not even Job could see. Why is God doing this? Why is he revealing to us what under normal circumstances we cannot know?

Job 1:6-12 (ESV)

6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. 7 The LORD said to Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." 8 And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?" 9 Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason? 10 Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. 11 But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face." 12 And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

The phrase “**sons of God**” often refers to all the angelic beings or the “heavenly hosts.” Apparently they are required to come before the throne of God periodically and give an account of what they have been doing. Satan is also required to answer for his actions.

You’ll remember that anytime you see “**LORD**,” in all capital letters, that stands for **YHWH**, or **Yahweh**, the personal name of God. Satan is not all-powerful. Satan, “the Adversary,” answers to God. God does not answer to Satan.

Yahweh asks Satan where he’s been. Satan answers, essentially saying that he’s been wandering around the earth, presumably watching the people on it. Satan is like a homeless vagabond, wandering here and there and walking to and fro on the earth. Satan is a lost wanderer.

There Is No One Like Him On Earth

Then God does something interesting. He brings up Job. God mentions Job to Satan. God knows what he is doing. The earlier description of Job is repeated, he is **blameless and upright, fearing God and turning away from evil**. But God adds one phrase. Yahweh says, “**There is none like him on the earth.**” Yahweh knows this because he knows all people and Job is unlike anyone else on the planet. This is an amazing statement. Job stands in a place in the sight of God in which no one else on earth has joined him. His relationship with Yahweh is singular.

Glorious or Goofy? Strategic or Stupid?

Perhaps this is like mentioning your prized possession to a bully. I suspect it’s not dissimilar to saying to the school bully, “Did you see my new white shoes?” What’s the bully going to do? He’s going to do what bullies do and step on your new shoes to make them dirty. Now, God is either up to something good and glorious here or he’s goofy. It was either stupid to mention Job to Satan—who had already been watching and poking at him—or it was strategic. We need to decide which it is. Was it goofy or glorious, stupid or strategic?

Satan does not speak unless he is spoken to and when he speaks he only answers the questions he’s been asked. God asks Satan if he’s been thinking about Job? His answer reveals that he’s not only been pondering Job, but he’s also been poking at him. Satan says, “You’ve put a wall of protection around him and I can’t get to him,” which implies that Satan has been unsuccessfully trying to get to Job. He goes on, “You’ve blessed all he does and he just keeps getting richer. But, claims Satan, “If you take away his stuff, you’ll see how thin his faith really is.” Satan invites God to “**stretch out your hand and touch all that he has and he will curse you to your face**” (v.12).

Satan does not believe that Job loves his God more than his goods. He’s convinced that when the stuff is gone, so will be Job’s faith. If God would take away his toys, Satan expects Job to

curse God to his face. Will the man who is continually concerned that his children may have secretly cursed God, now curse God himself?

One thing is for certain, God knows exactly how Job will respond. God does not lack the ability to accurately foresee contingent events. God knows perfectly well what one person will do or not do if this or that happens. Satan does *not* know this. Also, God is also not obligated to prove anything to Satan.

Why Does God Mention Job?

So, once again, what is God doing? Why is this whole episode unfolding? What is God up to? Why is God pulling back the heavenly curtain and allowing us to see inside? Is it not so that we will better understand the events on earth? Job does not know this, but we do. What Paul wrote in his letter to the Corinthians is true,

1 Corinthians 10:11 (ESV)

Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.

These things are not happening for the benefit of Satan. God owes him nothing. What is being revealed through this conversation is for our benefit and our instruction. One fact that we need to be instructed on is that Satan has no authority to do anything apart from the sovereign decree of Yahweh.

Job 1:12 (ESV)

And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

Yahweh said to Satan, "All his possessions are in your hand. You may touch his possessions, but not his person" (v.12). Satan obeyed. Satan stayed within the boundaries that God set for him. He did not cross them. We'll see this.

Job's Calamity Revealed (1:13-19)

The next section reveals Job's calamity.

Job 1:13-19 (ESV)

13 Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, 14 and there came a messenger to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, 15 and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you." 16 While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have

escaped to tell you." 17 While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "The Chaldeans formed three groups and made a raid on the camels and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you." 18 While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, 19 and behold, a great wind came across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead, and I alone have escaped to tell you."

Notice how quickly celebration turns to sorrow, and feasting to fasting. All of Job's children are feasting together, celebrating in the oldest brother's house. Job was not with them. Suddenly a servant came rushing in and told Job that the Sabeans had attacked, stolen all the oxen and donkeys, and slaughtered all the servants except him alone.

While he was speaking, a second servant rushed in and told Job that "fire from God had fallen from heaven" and burned up the sheep (all 7,000 of them) and their servants and he alone had escaped.

While he was still speaking, a third servant rushed in to tell of three groups of Chaldean raiders who stole all of the 3,000 camels and slaughtered all of the servants except him alone.

While he was still speaking, a fourth servant rushed in with the most devastating news of all. All 10 of his children were feasting in the oldest brother's house when a tornado struck the house, causing it to collapse, which killed everyone inside and he alone escaped. This servant notes that all of Job's children were "young people" (v.19).

Note the extent of the calamity. Satan was granted the power to manipulate entire groups of people, both the Sabeans and the Chaldeans, in sufficient number to make off with thousands of camels, donkeys, and oxen. They killed perhaps multiple dozens of servants. Furthermore, he was granted the ability to bring down "fire from heaven" and cause a tornado that took the lives of all ten of Job's children and likely several servants.

All of this happened in the span of one afternoon. Job lost all of his wealth and all of his children in one day. There are not many people in the history of the world who have experienced this degree of loss. I dare say none of you listening to my voice of gone through this degree of grief.

What would you do with this news?

Job's Response Revealed (1:20-22)

The final three verses reveal Job's response to this news.

Job 1:20-22 (ESV)

20 Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. 21 And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." 22 In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.

These may be the most important three verses in the whole chapter. This is right response to suffering. First he **grieved**. Then he worshiped. Job stood up, tore his robe, no doubt with a gut-wrenching cry of agony as he ripped it. He did not withhold his sorrow. He gave vent to it. Then he shaved his head. He changed his appearance because everything in his life just changed forever. He would never see his 10 children again, but what he did next is amazing.

After grieving, Job **worshiped**. He fell on his face and he worshiped. To worship God is to ascribe glory to his name. It is to proclaim him as valuable and declare the goodness of his attributes, and the worth of his character. Job worshiped God in the middle of his calamity.

Naked I Came & Naked I Will Go

Job noted that he owned nothing and that God owed him nothing. He entered this world empty and he will exit this world empty. *He is acknowledging that all of his possessions and his people, his children, are gracious gifts from God.* He had no right to his possessions or his people. They were undeserved blessings given to him by his gracious God. Everything he had come to him from God. Therefore, God is not wrong to take them back.

Yahweh Gives & Yahweh Takes

Job confesses, "**Yahweh gave, and Yahweh has taken away.**" Job's God is graciously sovereign over all of his life. He is sovereign over the giving, "**Yahweh gave,**" and he is sovereign over the taking, "**Yahweh has taken away.**" Yes, it was the hand of Satan that struck his possessions and his children, but Job knows that Yahweh controls every inch of his activity and so he understands this to have come about ultimately from the decree of Yahweh. And he is not wrong to think this, because the next verse confirms it.

Job 1:22 (ESV)

In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.

Job just said, "**Yahweh gave, and Yahweh has taken away.**" If it were wrong to understand that Yahweh to have taken, then he would be ascribing to God something that he did not do and that would be both wrong and a sin. Yet verse 22 tells us that Job is not wrong to understand God to be ultimately sovereign over the taking, even though it was Satan who actually carried out the tragic deeds. Yahweh is ultimately sovereign of Satan and he is not to be cursed for this secret sovereignty, but rather he is to be praised. Look again at verse 21.

Job 1:21 (ESV)

The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.

Job knows the covenant name of God, **Yahweh**, and he chose to bless his name on the day of his great loss. Job worshiped God in the midst of his grieving. Job did not curse God as Satan had supposed. In stead, he did the exact opposite. He **blessed** the name of Yahweh. Job cherished God more than his goods. Job loved Yahweh more than he loved his own children. Recall the words of Jesus.

Matthew 10:37 (ESV)

"Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."

The greatest commandment in the whole of Scripture is to *"Love Yahweh your God, with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your strength."*⁵ When you realize you deserve nothing from him and yet everything you have has come to you by his grace and not your merit, then you will be able to worship him when he takes it all from you. Oh, do you love him more than your possessions? Do you love him more than your people? He is more valuable than everything you own and he is more precious than your own children.

Conclusion

This is the goal of this chapter, to take us to a place where we love God more than our possessions and our people. Job is the model for us. If we lost everything, could we still bless his name and not curse him?

Yahweh is the great God who has given us his only Son. He gave us everything. Can we not bless his name? Bless his name for all that he has given you. Bless his name when it is taken away. Blessed be Yahweh, who gives and takes. Bless the great name of a sovereign God. Bless the name of him who controls Satan. Bless his name who has created this universe and still sustains it to this day. Bless Yahweh who has given us his only Son, through whom we have life and redemption.

Worship him.

Bless his holy name.

⁵ Dt. 6:5; Mt. 22:37.