

Sermon by Philip C. Herrmann, March 11, 1973

Willo Bible Chapel, Willoughby, OH (43:34)

... this morning, about one of the old characters in the Old Testament, and he poses three questions, in the book of Job, beginning with the third chapter. And his character is commended in two places in the Scriptures, one in the New Testament in the book of James. And there he is commended for his patience, for his endurance. He is also commended in the book of Ezekiel several times as one of three persons notably righteous. God saw their personal righteousness, and he said that if they were living in the day that Ezekiel was writing, they would just preserve themselves in the land by their own righteousness. The rest of the nation, God could have no use for, could have nothing to do with. And those three were Noah, who was said to have walked with God before the Flood, and Job, who is the subject of this morning, and Daniel, who was living at the time of Ezekiel. There the commendation is for their righteousness, for their righteous living. God saw them and commended them for it.

Job poses three questions in his book, in the book that was written about him, and I take it, I think that the usual belief is that the book of Job, or the story of Job, the history of Job, the life of Job, is more or less commensurate with the life of Moses, or perhaps a little before it, for Job lived some 200 years, and men did not live that long at a later date. Moses lived 120 years, and some of the others lived around a hundred, but by the time that David wrote, the average life was 70 years.

Now if you have the Bible open to the third chapter of the book of Job, I'll read the first of these questions. And we must take into consideration that Job is saying things, believing that certain things are true, which were not, because he did not know what had gone on in Heaven before. Now I'll just summarize that after I read the three questions. In Job chapter 3, which incidentally is in the middle of the Old Testament, and one wonders why if his life was at the same time as Moses, or a little before, why it isn't right after the book of Genesis. But Job is a part of the sacred writings of the Jews, who considered that it was not included in the books of the law, which would be the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses, Genesis to Deuteronomy, and it would not be the historical books, and it would not be the prophets.

You remember how the Lord after his resurrection stated to the disciples that, he explained to them all the scriptures, that is the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, the things concerning himself. And so they did not put this book of Job in chronological order, but according to how they valued it in the sacred writings. Reading from the first verse, "After this," after Job's terrible disasters, first the loss of everything he owned and his children, then the second disaster which was his health, where he was smitten with boils from the top of his head to the soles of his feet, "After this opened Job his mouth, and cursed his day." He had been bidden to curse God, but he wouldn't do that. He said "should we receive good at the hands of God and not receive evil?" and so in that, he didn't do what was suggested to him, for God would have had to summarily execute him, banish him from his presence. God had other blessed things in store for him, as we shall see. Now this is what he said, cursing his day. "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived." Verse 11: "Why died I not from the womb? why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the body?" And verse 25 and 26: "For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me. I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet; yet trouble came."

Then a few verses from the sixth chapter for all of this is part of Job's complaint. Verse 8: "Oh that I might have my request; and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! Even that it would please God to destroy me; that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off!"

Now I think we might summarize all of this, this terrible feeling on the part of Job which we can excuse him, because he had lost everything, lost his property and his family, except his wife, and he was now, expecting I'm sure, an early death. Because if you've had any boils, if you've had just one boil, you'll certainly remember what an inconvenience, what pain, what irritation it meant. And then if you had to have it lanced, you'll know that that caused considerable pain, and the draining that followed. and the chance that there would be more infection. Because, as I understand it, the condition of the blood is what brings about the infection, and spreads it.

And the second question that Job poses at a later time is in the ninth chapter. Before I read this question we might say that the passages I've read, the parts of his speech that I've read might be put in this fashion: For what purpose was I born? If all this suffering is come upon me, and I see no end to it, and I wish God would put an end to it, for what purpose was I born? And that's a very profound question. I'm sure every one of us has had the same question, though not caused by the same circumstances. But the second question is, "Job answered and said," (this is him answering the second one of his friends, who came to console and comfort him) "I know it is so of a truth: but how should a man be just" (or be righteous) "before God?" That's a profound question.

For Job knew something of the character of God. He had been receiving blessings from God; God considered him a great man. And God considers greatness from a different standpoint than we do. If a person has great ability, and he makes a great name for himself, he occupies a high office, such for instance a king or a queen, or one of the great offices in the land, in the earth, we consider he has a certain kind of greatness. But God's greatness is the one who serves the most. The Lord told us that; he said to the disciples when they were asking who was going to be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, he said "I am among you as one that serves." [Luke 22:27] "And the one who serves the most, he is the greatest among you." He also indicated that the way to serve the most was to get down to the lowest place, from which he could raise him up, and make him a vehicle of his ability to serve others.

So Job was called the greatest man in the East, and God gave him commensurate blessings. He was not only rich, but he had the respect and honor of all around him. You read the 30th chapter of this book, or the 29th chapter, you'll see what Job says about himself. He was eyes to the blind, he was a father to the orphans, and he helped the widows. [Job 29:12] He was a philanthropist, he served others, he was a great man in God's account, and more than all this he had faith. He had a personal relationship with God. In the day he lived there was no Bible, and God appeared to man in visions, in dreams, in a voice. I believe that's how God appeared to Abraham, that is in a voice; he also appeared to Adam in a voice. We know how very shortly, Adam was afraid of that voice, and he hid himself, only to have God come after him and say "Where art thou?"

Well the wonderful thing of this question is that it involves all of us. We might say, how am I, anyone, everyone, how are we to stand before God on a righteous basis. We know that if we are honest, we are sinners. The wisest man in all the earth, the greatest man in that respect, Solomon, says there is not a good man upon earth, there is not a righteous man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not. [Ecclesiastes 7:20] But all their good that men can do, with all the philanthropy, with all the kindness

that men can show, with all the institutions we have for disseminating money to alleviate the sufferings throughout the world, (I might just mention that I was once in the office of the Ford Foundation, and the man that I was soliciting business from interrupted his conversation with me and a telephone call came, and I didn't hear what the request was, but he immediately authorized the sending of \$50,000 worth of medicine to India. That was at the time of some epidemic. So there is a great deal that's being done that we don't know anything of but that as a condition of God's blessing, or as a condition for salvation, is altogether out of the picture.) God enjoys, he appreciates, and I'm sure he blesses such philanthropy, but it doesn't cut any ice, you might say, with him as far as the salvation of men's souls is concerned.

Now the third question is in the fourteenth chapter, and it's just a simple question that affects every one of us, and it certainly did in the time of the Lord, for when this question was asked, there were those who denied the very fact of the question here. Verse 14. "If a man die, shall he live again?" In other words, is this life all, or is there a resurrection and a life to come? Is there a future life that man can look to, for I suppose the great majority of the people of this world have an uneasy and an unpleasant time of it. They seem to run in the way of famines, or pestilence, of disease, of a great many kinds of troubles.

For the background for all of this, for these three questions, let me say that Job didn't know the background of his misery, of his difficulty. On a certain day, Satan appeared in Heaven. He is now called the prince of the power of the air. He has free access into holy places as well as the wicked world around him. He is also called the god of this world. He is the instigator of all the violence, and the corruption that we read of in the papers, or we hear over the TV. But in this case, God asked him a question. He was not there on that occasion (if he was, we're not told it); he is in the heavenlies now as man's accuser, the accuser of the Lord's people. And the Lord has to plead his blood, his sacrifice upon the cross, as that which quiets Satan, and stills his voice.

God asked him, "Have you considered my servant Job?" It's nice to be called a servant of God. "Have you considered my servant Job, and how righteous he is?" And so Satan's answer to that was, "You've made a hedge around him, but if you touch him, if he loses all that wealth," (for he was a wealthy man), "you take everything he has away, he will curse you to your face." Well, the Lord said, "I'll take you up on that." You go and do that, but don't touch his life. In a very short time, Job loses his houses, his servants, his cattle, all the wealth he has, he even loses his children, his seven sons and three daughters, in a day. Job's answer was not to cry out against God, "Why did this happened to me," but "the Lord has given, the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." [Job 1:21] In all this, the comment, the Divine comment is "Job did not sin with his lips."

So time went on, and again there is a scene in Heaven where Satan appears and the Lord asks him the same question, "Have you considered my servant Job?" It refers to the fact that Satan had practically destroyed everything Job had, left him with just his life." So Satan said, "If you touch his body, then he will curse you to your face." And the Lord allows him to do that, but he said "don't take his life." Satan did exactly that: he smote Job with boils. Now notice, not just one, or two, or a dozen, but all over his body; he must have been a mass of corruption, and of pain, of suffering, of inconvenience, and his wife then said, "curse God and die." We can imagine a little bit of the suffering of Job, and he had to reprove her and say "you speak as one of the foolish women." Has God given us all we have, yes, but he's fair, he's righteous, he's perfect.

That leads us up to where we are, in the third chapter, the first question, “why was I born?” What’s the end of all of this? Why must I suffer so? I suppose all of us have had this same experience in a smaller degree. Well, as you know, Job then gets to the ash heap, and scrapes himself with a potsherd. And his friends hear of his terrible sufferings, and they come to console and comfort him, but they see that his grief is so great, that they have no words of consolation. They are mystified, and they sit down for seven days and seven nights, it says, a whole week, 168 hours, before any of them say a word. So you can picture a scene of misery. And that brings us to the chapter that we have before us, the first question.

Well this goes on and on and on. There are three friends, and each speaks. The first one, I suppose the oldest, speaks to Job and Job replies. The second friend speaks to Job and Job replies. All of this takes chapters, for all these are speeches, and they all have to do with Job and God. And the gist of it is that they cannot understand how God could inflict such suffering upon a man if there wasn’t a cause. Job must be a hypocrite, he must be wicked, he must have done something, he must have some secret sins that they don’t know about, and maybe even Job doesn’t know about. But for every effect there must be a cause; that’s their philosophy. And this goes on three times: the first man speaks, the second, the third. Then again the first, the second, the third. Then again the first, and the second, but for that time Zophar, the third friend, has nothing more to say. And Job continues with his speech, with his comment, and it’s all to the effect that he has done nothing wrong, that he is righteous, that he doesn’t understand why he is having this trouble inflicted upon him.

You see we know, by reading the book of Job, what he doesn’t know that all of this is allowed by God, a permissive work on God’s part, to bring Job to his certain place, to a certain understanding of himself. For that’s what Job lacked. He didn’t have the humility, he didn’t have the sense of sin, in the presence of God, that everyone must have, before God can righteously save him. The sinner that says, like the man in the parable in the 18th of Luke, God be merciful to me the sinner, the sinner, not a sinner, but the sinner, just as if there were no other sinner in the world but him. God be merciful to me the sinner, and immediately it says that that man went down to his house justified. God considered him righteous, God placed the value of the cross of Christ, the work that Christ did upon that cross, he places it to his value and considers him righteous. That’s the doctrine of imputation. And that’s what we all need. We all need to know that we are a sinner, have no standing before God, for that’s what justification is, it’s the standing before God. Just what Job said, “how can man be just before God?”

Well that question was never answered in the Old Testament, but I’m getting ahead of my story. Well after these friends exhaust themselves, they have no other explanation, “Job you must have done something that merited God’s judgment upon you.” And when they’re through, and Job has finished his sayings, for he said so, he exonerated himself, made himself righteous in the eyes of his friends, justified himself in their sight, then a young man comes, and his name is Elihu. And he knows a little bit more about God, but he also says that because there is wrath, beware lest he take thee away with his stroke. Then a great ransom cannot deliver thee.

Well Elihu says his part, and then God speaks to Job, in answer to all that Job has said, because Job has said a great many things against God. We had the first of it in this, “O that God would destroy me!” God doesn’t destroy anyone that speaks to him as one who needs him, as Job did. God speaks to Job out of the whirlwind. Job never saw him, but after three chapters of questions, I think some 50

questions that the Lord asks, “Job, where were you when I created the world, when I laid the foundations of the earth?” Where were you when all of these things in the creation were going on? And all the history of the past, up to the present time, from the beginning of creation to now, where were you? What do you know about so-and-so? All these wonderful questions that God asks, and finally Job has to say that “I am vile. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eyes seeth thee.” Not with his physical eye, that was his spiritual eye, the inner eye, that which realizes the truth of what God is bringing to us, and he says, “I am vile.”

God immediately tells him to pray for his three friends “who have not spoken of me what they should have,” the things they should have. Immediately the boils cease, the poison is done away with, and Job is restored. And God, it says, gave him twice as much as he had before. So when we were singing that hymn “There shall be showers of blessing,” I was thinking of that beautiful verse in Malachi, that shows that if we want to get blessing, we owe God something for it. He says, open the doors of the house, and prove me now therewith, if I bring the tithes into the storehouse, prove me now therewith, if I do not open the windows of heaven. That’s not showers of blessing, but the windows, just imagine a window of heaven, what showers that would be, that would be a cloud of rain, wouldn’t it, would be something like we’ve never heard before. That would be the showers of blessing, and prove me now therewith, if I do not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, a blessing you are not able to receive.

So that is the story of Job; now let’s try to answer those three questions. Why am I here? Why was I let live? Why was I born? The apostle Paul gives us several of the answers, I believe the Lord gives us one, and just a few passages in the New Testament that I’d like to refer you to. You remember when Paul spoke in Athens, and anyone that goes to Greece, or anyone who goes on any of these Eastern tours, the Mediterranean, they’re sure to ascend that very place, where Paul spoke, on Mars Hill. spoke to these wonderful Greek people who were spending their time doing nothing else than speaking, or hearing, or learning, some new thing. And he tells them this new thing, what is only alluded to in the Old Testament, but is fully revealed in the New, is that men are here to seek God, and to find Him, because He’s not far from any one of us.

If man seeks God, it will be like the prodigal son. The moment he turned in repentance, and turned back home, the father was on his way to greet him. That’s the wonderful story of the heart of God. The slightest bit of repentance, the slightest bit of turning to God, He is more than halfway. He covered this prodigal son with kisses, and fed him, gave him the best robe, and a ring.

Well, the apostle also tells Timothy a wonderful reason why man is here: because God desires that all men be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. That last part of the sentence is a wonderful thing if you’ll just think of it. The Lord said, “For this was I born, and for this purpose I came into the world, to bear witness to the truth” [John 18:37] Well, the Lord spoke truth, but when he was here, when he was here on earth, how few believed him. I think I referred to it some time ago, that there were not more than 500 disciples, 500 believers, that was more than there were in the time of Elijah, there were 7000 that hadn’t bowed the knee to Baal, but after the Holy Spirit came down, then the number of believers increased to thousands.

Isaiah in the Old Testament had confirmed what Paul writes or spoke to the Athenians, that they should seek God. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found. Call ye upon him while he is near. Let the

wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts. The Lord will have mercy on him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. [Isaiah 55:6] That's what God expects man to do. But unfortunately man is so far from God, he hates the thought of God. He'll take all the blessings of God, the physical, and the natural, and the temporal blessings of God, but the spiritual blessings, the eternal blessings, no, that he has no use for. And so, when man did not seek God, God sent his Son to seek man.

The Lord said so himself: the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. [Luke 19:10] What a wonderful story. To think that man, who was so far from God, and going further, further and further away, that God should have any use for him, God should spare him, give him a lifelong time to repent and be saved.

Then you remember the incident where the Lord is asked as he leaves the Temple, and sees a blind man on the road begging. The disciples ask him, "Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind." [John 9:2] I don't understand how the man could sin before he was born, but that evidently was their belief. And the Lord very graciously answered, Neither did this man sin, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. or through him.

This is another reason why man is born. God has a work to do in each soul, if he will only commit himself to Him. And God has begun a work in every person who has believed on his Son, put his faith upon the one who hung from Calvary's cross. God has a work to do in that soul. Remember the apostle writing in Philippeans says that he that has begun a good work in you will continue it til the day of Jesus Christ. [Philippeans 1:6] That's the day when we ascend to the heavenly home.

Well for the believer, there's two passages that tell us why God had us in mind, why we were born. Those who have believed have this wonderful promise: that in the ages to come, God, through Christ, will show the exceeding riches of his grace to us in his kindness, through Christ Jesus. [Ephesians 2:7] And the other passage is that we should be for the praise and the glory of his grace, who trusted in Christ. [Ephesians 1:6]

I see that our time is passing, so I'll have to cut the other answers short. Being just before God, that was something that the Old Testament believer and the person that lived in the time of the Old Testament, that is BC, before Christ, knew nothing about. How could man be just before God, he was so far away from him. They didn't have a revelation like we have. The New Testament is the complete revelation; the Old Testament was only a very partial revelation of the heart of God, what God has in mind for his creatures, for those who put their trust in him. But we have the answer to this in the New Testament, Even David, who certainly knew that he was going to be in the house of the Lord forever, as we were reading this morning in that beautiful 23rd Psalm, he knew that he was going to be with Christ, he knew that he was going to be in heaven. God had something more for him than just a life here upon earth, his seventy years, seventy years of trouble, of fighting, or war. No, he shall live in the house of the Lord forever. And he says more than that in the seventeenth Psalm, He says I shall behold thy face in righteousness, and I shall become in thy likeness, I shall be raised in thy likeness, and shall be like Christ. [Psalm 17:15]

And that was what God originally intended for Adam, wasn't it. He made man in the image of God. He gave Adam every ability. Yet Adam missed the great prize, he missed the chance, fell into sin, deliberate sin, disobeyed God and forfeited everything. But the first man is succeeded by the second

man, the Lord from Heaven, and we're told in the fourth of Romans fourth and fifth chapters of Romans, that it's not of works. Become righteous before God is not my works, nothing I can do, to then him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly. his faith is counted for righteousness. [Romans 4:5]

Faith: taking God at his word, believing on him. That's what brings us into God's presence, and gives us all the righteousness of Christ. You see, as I said before, the righteousness of Christ, his perfection, is placed to my account. God sees me, in him.

Well the last question is, if a man die, will he live again. I said that the Sadducees, who were opponents of the Lord, one of the opponents, a great mass of men, because in the apostles' day, after the Lord had gone back to Heaven, these were the great antagonists of Paul and all of the other apostles. They did not believe in resurrection, they did not believe in angels, or spirits, they were the materialists, and how many of them we have today. When you die, they say, that's the end of you, you return to the dust. But Solomon said on that, "then shall the dust return to earth again, and the spirit to God, who gave it." [Ecclesiastes 12:7]

You remember the Lord answering the Sadducees questions, said that when the Lord appeared to Moses, he said I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac and Jacob. I am, not was, I am. And he rested the whole case of resurrection on that. But he added, For God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to Him. [Luke 20:37-38] You see what's so great with us, the article of death, and how few men can speak about this, because they know nothing of the Word of God. The Word of God could tell them, that death is just a transition. While the body goes into the earth, the spirit and soul return to God who gave it. They're responsible to Him, and all live to God. No such thing as death with Him, except the second death, which is the consignment of man to utter banishment from God's presence forever.

But that's at the last day. You remember the Lord in the fifth of John, the one chapter in all the Bible, if you wish to have an argument, a proof, if proof is needed, of the Deity of Christ, it's in the fifth chapter of John. There the Lord speaks words that only Deity could speak. He says the Father, God, his Father, God, had committed all judgment to him, for the Son, that all men should honor the Son, as they honor the Father. [John 5:22-23]

And how little men honor the Son today, don't they. They speak glibly of God, the Almighty, which is what the Old Testament folks used, especially in the book of Job, it's almighty God there, I'm sure He is almighty, no one with such might as He, but He's all loving too, all kind, all gracious, all wise, every character of Deity is His prerogative. And so the Lord said, this will be the end of the message this morning, he said, the hour is coming, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall arise. Those that have done good, to the resurrection of life; those that have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment. There's a thousand years at least between those two resurrections. Those that have done good, those that have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as their savior, those who have trusted in Old Testament times in the Lord for their salvation, all of these will be raised up in one fraction of a second, the twinkling of an eye, and be brought into God's presence forever.

But those that have done evil, those whose life is characterized by turning away from God and continuing to the end of their lives, those that have done that evil, will be resurrected at the last day. We're not told whether it will be in bodily form or not, but they will be resurrected, they will be raised

again to stand before the one who died for them on Calvary's cross to receive the just reward of their deeds. Shall we pray.

Blessed God our Father, we thank Thee for these three questions among many that are raised in the book of Job. Perhaps when men are at the end of their tether, when they know that things are serious, just as with persons who expect an operation within a day or two, how fearsome they become. And so these questions strike at the heart of things; they're eternal questions, and we thank thee that thy word abundantly answers them and gives us a way of escape, turns us to the only one that can give us hope. May we not be affected by the easy philosophy of the world around us, that God is too kind to judge men eternally. We have to take thee as thou art, as the word of God reveals thee. We trust that every one who has been listening will take these words to heart, not because a human being spoke them but because they point to the word of God, point to God and to His Son, the only one who stands between us and eternal judgment. You said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the father but by me." We pray thou would bless each one here, bless the dear children downstairs, may they receive the word of God likewise, in the Lord's precious name we ask thee, Amen. The meeting is over.