

Walk Through The Bible

*The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul;
The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;
8The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;
9The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.
10More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.
11Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward.
(Psalm 19:7-11. NKJV)*

*25But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.
(James 1:25. NKJV)*

His Grief Was Very Great

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Job 1-2

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Introduction:

Open your Bibles this morning to Job chapter 1. You are going to love this!! I feel a little bit like a museum tour guide this morning as I get to lead you through one of the greatest landscapes in the strange new world of the Bible. The Book of Job has historically been viewed as one of the most soaring sections of Holy Scripture. John Calvin preached 159 sermons on the Book of Job. Think about that. The man considered by most people to be the greatest Bible preacher since the close of the canon, preached 159 sermons on the Book of Job. To put that in perspective for you, that means that if he preached one every Sunday morning it would take him 3 years to finish it, and that's without taking breaks for Christmas and Easter¹! That tells you a little something of how important this book was considered in historic Christianity. Now, fast forward to our day, and it has become one of the most neglected parts in Scripture. Why is that? Well there are a couple of reasons. Probably the most influential on that trend is the way it is written. You have to be very patient and very thoughtful to understand what the Book of Job is saying. Christians today like teachings that can fit on a scrap of toilet paper or the front of a

¹ Of course Calvin preached multiple times per week and actually preached through Job in his mid-week messages. The point is just that it occupied a big slice of his preaching attention.

coffee mug right? “Love others”. “Be nice”. “Love covers over a multitude of....” no, that one is too long for one square of toilet paper, that won’t work. We are not patient and we don’t like to think. We like to be spoon fed and we want our theology in CUBES. Job does not conform to that desire. The Book of Job is made up mostly of speeches, all of which are mostly true but ultimately inadequate to explain the unique situation Job finds himself in. Only when God speaks AT THE END does the full truth emerge. Christians today are not good at waiting 37 chapters to get to the “good stuff” nor do we tend to have the patience to think carefully through MOSTLY TRUE statements in order to sort out what we should take away and what we should discard as inadequate. We want simple things like: “Job’s friends are stupid, the things they say are wrong!” or “Job is brilliant, the things he says are gold!”; but the book doesn’t work that way. Now listen carefully and I will give you the interpretive key that makes this book make sense for you as you read it over the next month. I stole this from John Calvin, but don’t tell him. Here it is. Calvin said that Job makes a good case poorly and his friends make a poor case very well. Did you get that? Job makes a good case poorly and his friends make a poor case very well. Everything Job says is true, but his emotions get the best of him and sometimes he sounds pouty and self righteous, but on the whole, his theology is entirely correct, though he doesn’t yet know enough to make sense of his situation. His friends have inadequate theology. They tell him all sorts of things that are kind of true, maybe 75% true, but they ultimately result in God being mischaracterised and so they are declared to be well meaning heretics in the end by God. The problem is they argue those poor points REALLY WELL. They sound so Biblical, they sound so rational, they sound “righter” than Job, though “righter” is not a real word. They sound like they should be right, but in the end they don’t know God well enough to speak the whole truth, the healing truth that Job needs to hear. And so as we read this book we are going to hear echoes of the things we have said to people suffering hardship and we are going to want to cover our mouths because we are going to realise that we too have mischaracterised God, we too have said sometimes too little and sometimes too much, but if we wait and if we persevere we are going to be equipped to endure hardship and we are going to be equipped to offer comfort to people in need. Are you with me?

Let me give you just a bit of background so that you can engage this great book. The first thing you need to know is that we are not really sure when this story takes place because there are no internal markers. It never says: “In the third year of King Xerxes or in the fourth year of Pharaoh Ahmose” or anything like that so we can’t say for sure when this happens. Over the years

scholars have often suggested that it best fits the time of Moses, as did Calvin, so perhaps we would do best to assume that time. Whenever it happened, one thing we can say for sure, it was WRITTEN a long time ago indeed. The Hebrew is among the most ancient and the most complicated in the Bible. There are more translation difficulties in the Book of Job than in just about any other book in the Bible. Many of the words are simply so old as to be unrecognisable. This is a book where having margin notes that indicate alternative translations will be very useful. Finally, it will be helpful for you to know that the story of Job is told in a poetic way, but that does not mean to imply that it is a parable or a wisdom tale. Job has generally been understood within the church as a historical story, meaning that he was a real person and this really did happen, but the story is told in a generally poetic way to assist in memorisation. Remember that for much of history a community would own only one copy of the Scriptures and so if the stories were to be told in the home to children they would need to be written in a way that facilitated memorisation. So the basic storyline of Job is in prose – straightforward writing, but the speeches are set as poetry so that they can be remembered. Let's begin reading. My plan for today is to walk you through the first two chapters and to give the story the opportunity to speak to you and along the way, by God's grace, we will draw out the massive theological principles that will be wrestled with throughout the rest of the book. Chapter 1:

¹There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name *was* Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil.

Again if we assume a time period between Abraham and Moses, we remember that there were many people who worshipped God who were not properly Jewish. Think of Melchizedek, think of Moses' father in law Jethro, so we know that Job is a believer, he worships the one true God. The text is telling us that Job is a good man. He knows God, he worships God, he orders his conduct around what he knows of God and he turns away from evil. By the way, before you write off Job and say in your dispensational heart: "Well this is just some sort of pre-covenant desert dweller who knows nothing of the Holy Spirit, nothing of the cross, nothing of the New Testament, what have I to learn from him?"; remember that this is the way that right walking with God is described in the New Testament too. In the NT we are told to "fear God", Hebrews 12 says:

²⁸Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we [£]may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. (Hebrews 12:28. NKJV)

And Romans 12 says:

Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. (Romans 12:9. NKJV)

So even in the NT, even in the age of grace, the description of a godly person hasn't changed. Fear God and hate evil. Move toward God in worship and move away from evil in your conduct. So this guy is a good role model, endorsed by Holy Scripture. Let's read on.

²And seven sons and three daughters were born to him.

The brother had a lot of kids, again, sounds like a good role model. 😊

³Also, his possessions were seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and a very large household, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the East.

⁴And his sons would go and feast *in their* houses, each on his *appointed* day, and would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.

⁵So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and sanctify 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 sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did regularly.

Job was a good man, he was a rich man and he was a good father. His kids would have parties and Job couldn't be sure what was going on there and he was worried that maybe one of them might have had too much to drink and might have said or done something displeasing to the Lord so he would sanctify his kids and he would pray and make sacrifice on their behalf. He wanted his whole family to walk in a way that honoured the Lord. That's a way of saying, Job's a good dad. He's a priest in his home. That's high praise in Bible land.

⁶Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.

We need to stop here and discuss the identity of these "sons of God". Turn quickly in your Bibles to Genesis 6. We've seen these characters before haven't we?

¹Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them,

²that **the sons of God** saw the daughters of men, that they *were* beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose..... ⁴There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, **when the sons of God came**

in to the daughters of men and they bore *children* to them. Those *were* the mighty men who *were* of old, men of renown. (Genesis 6:1-4. NKJV)

So these were fallen angels who attempted to incarnate themselves by impregnating human women. This was an abomination in God's eyes and was one of the causes for the flood. The Hebrew in Genesis 6 and also in Job 1 is *ben elohim* and it literally means "sons of God" though the more paraphrastic translations render it simply as "angels". These are angels. Now it says in verse 6 that Satan was among them. The Hebrew there is literally *ha-satan* which means "the Accuser" or "the Adversary". One of the things you might not know is that "satan" is not the devil's name, it is his job title. His name is Lucifer, his job title is that he is the adversary, the tester, the accuser of mankind. And who does he report to? God Almighty. Wow! Here is your first MASSIVE THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLE. God is Sovereign over everything and everyone in the universe. Satan is a created thing, he is on the payroll of God Almighty and he is permitted to do only God's bidding. This truth confronts the error of dualism that is creeping back into the church. Dualism is the HERETICAL idea that there are really two Gods in the universe. There is the good God, Yahweh, the Trinity, and he does all the good things that happen. And then there is the Devil, the bad God, Lucifer and he does all the bad things. And we are kind of caught in the middle. Now, not too many Christians would come out and say that, but that is how far too many Christians today talk. When a good thing happens, they say: "Praise the Lord!" But when a bad thing happens, what do they say? When a child is killed in a car accident, what do we say? We say: "God can turn this to the good. God did not DO this, the enemy did this, but God will turn that to the good." That's dualism. What can the devil do? Only what God tasks him to do! The devil is not a maker of history, GOD IS SOVEREIGN OVER HISTORY and the devil is a dog on a chain! That's a pretty big rock, theologically speaking, but we meet it in verse 6 and we will be dealing with all month.

⁷And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" So Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."

⁸**Then 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, one who fears God and shuns evil?"

Verse 8 is so massively important church. Do you see? Who initiates the horrible things that are about to happen to poor Job? Is it the devil? No!!! It is God Almighty! He says to the devil: "Look over there at my servant Job!" God directs the attention of the devil toward Job; that is massively significant. God is the ultimate cause of all things church, he is the Unmoved Mover; we say that, but are we prepared to believe that this morning? Satan is but a club in God's hand,

a tool he uses for his purpose, nothing more. This is all throughout the Bible. Do you recall when God wished to chastise Northern Israel? They had fallen deep into idolatry and they worshipped the Lord as only one of many gods and so God desired to instruct and to purify them. Do you recall what he did? The story is found in Isaiah 10:5-7, let me read that to you:

“Woe to Assyria, **the rod of My anger** and the staff in whose hand is My indignation. ⁶I will send him against an ungodly nation, and against the people of My wrath I will give him charge, to seize the spoil, to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. ⁷**Yet he does not mean so**, nor does his heart think so; but *it is* in his heart to destroy, and cut off not a few nations. (Isaiah 10:5-7. NKJV)

God says: “I know what will properly chastise and educate my people, a nice butt whipping from the King of Assyria! I will use him as the rod of my anger across their bare bottoms. Yet he does not mean to assist me in my chastisement, he means to rob, rape, pillage and steal. Therefore, when I have used him for my purpose I shall turn on him and chastise him also!” Do you see? God is Sovereign; God is the Mover! He uses a rod or a tool but he also JUDGES THE MOTIVES OF THE INSTRUMENT!!!! Isn’t that fascinating? That is a MASSIVE THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLE that we will also continue to wrestle with. The story goes on:

⁹So Satan answered the LORD and said, “Does Job fear God for nothing?”

¹⁰Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.

¹¹But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!”

¹²And the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, **all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person.**” So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

Satan argues that the only reason Job worships God so passionately and so faithfully is because God has been so good to him. God has given Job a beautiful family, God has given him health and prosperity; of course he worships God. Let those things be taken from him and we will see the true state of his faith. God agrees that this does represent a challenge to God’s enjoyment of Job’s faith and so permission is given to the devil to take all those good things away. And yet a limit is placed; you cannot touch his person. My friends, does this passage not give you chills? It ought to. The Bible says the most alarming thing. It says that prosperity, health and well being, while being gifts God delights to give to his children, will in the end, likely need to be removed if God is to receive glory from our faith. And what, church, if I may ask, is the REASON WE ARE HERE? Is it to eat, drink and be merry? Is it to be healthy, happy and rich? If you listen to the prosperity preachers you will think it so. If you listen to Joyce Meyer and Joel Osteen you will think it so. Most of what they say is true, most of it could be taken right from the

first verses in this chapter. They say God is a good God and delights to give us good things. That's true!! They say God is stronger than the devil and God's good desires control our experiences. That's true! They say that sickness and poverty and hardship are not God's ultimate will for his creation. That's true! All of that is true but it is inadequate, it is incomplete. The full truth is that in order for you to enjoy the health and the prosperity and the endless, eternal JOYS that God has for you, in order for your faith to be adequate unto SALVATION it may be necessary for God to take all those things away! God glories in REAL FAITH, he glories in FAITH THAT EXPRESSES LOVE OF HIM not just love of HIS GIFTS! And so, into every life some rain and some pain must fall. And so it goes.

¹³Now there was a day when his sons and daughters *were* eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house;

¹⁴and a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them,

¹⁵when the Sabeans raided *them* and took them away—indeed they have killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!"

¹⁶While he *was* still speaking, another also came 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!"

¹⁷While he *was* still speaking, another also came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three bands, raided the camels and took them away, yes, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!"

¹⁸While he *was* still speaking, another also came and said, "Your sons and daughters *were* eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house,

¹⁹and suddenly a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people, and they are dead; and I alone have escaped to tell you!"

This is a story of unspeakable tragedy! This is EPIC SUFFERING! In one day this good man has lost his business, he has lost his income, he has lost his work force and worst of all he has lost his family! 10 children killed in one day! Can you even imagine that? What could be the cause of this epic catastrophe? Was it the Sabeans? Was it the Lightning strikes? Was it the Chaldeans? Was it the tornado? What did Job think was going on here? Let's watch this man process his tragedy, verse 20 says:

²⁰Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped.

²¹And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. **The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away;** Blessed be the name of the LORD."

²²In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong. (Job 1:1-22. NKJV)

Wow! Wow! The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away; BLESSED BE THE NAME OF THE LORD!!! And ALL OF HEAVEN FELL SILENT at the display of this man's faith. God SHUT THE MOUTH OF THE DEVIL with this display. GOD GLORIED IN THIS MOMENT. Here is a man who loves the Lord not because of the gifts, not because of the protection, not because of

the blessings but just because he is GOD and he is GOOD! This is the high water mark in all of human worship church, there has likely never been a more God-glorifying display in all the time of man! Short of the Lord Jesus Christ, who in Scripture gave God more honour, more pleasure and more glory than this man Job? Can you even imagine responding like this on a day like that? I can only pray that I would respond like that because I just don't know. None of us can know how we would face that can we? In all his trouble, in all his sorrow, Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.

Over the course of my years I have seen many people whose faith was proved false by suffering less than this. I'm sure you have too. I do not mean to demean those people or to make light of their pain, a broken marriage or a child's premature and tragic death is always a horror beyond comprehension, I know that, but it is significant that some people respond by hating God, or by drifting into despair and leaving the church and finding themselves unable to worship and others through tears and in the very midst of loss can stand up in the assembly of God's people and say: "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord". Those people must truly know God to say such things. Those people can be assured of their salvation if anyone can. The story goes on in chapter 2:

¹Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD.

²And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."

³Then 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, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause."

Again the story confronts us with the difficult truth that it is God who thinks we haven't gone far enough with this test, it is God that again points the devil back at Job and says, "We need to turn up the heat, we need to go further." God is the author of even the deepest of our trials. It is not as though God gave Satan permission and Satan went further than he was permitted, it is not as though we can credit God with the theory of testing and blame the devil for wrong execution, no, God is Sovereign over the fire and even over the temperature of that fire.

⁴So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life.

⁵But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!"

⁶And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he *is* in your hand, but spare his life."

And so by the Word of the Lord the chain of the devil is lengthened. He may now touch Job's health and scar his body.

⁷So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.

⁸And he took for himself a potsherd with which to scrape himself while he sat in the midst of the ashes.

⁹Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!"

Job's wife has good theology but a bad attitude. She knows this is a test from God but she urges Job to tap out. Just curse God and die. You're not a perfect man. Say uncle and God will let you rest in death. But Job won't do it. He still leads in his home even though it lies in ruins:

¹⁰But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. **Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?**" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

He says to his wife: "Hold it now; did we not worship God when he gave us good? How then should we curse God when he sends us trial? He is still God; he hasn't changed even if our circumstances have." That is real faith friends! How do you know whether you love God or you love GIFTS? You have to have the gifts taken from you! Oh church, I can't predict the future but I can read the Bible. Can't you see what this must mean for us? In the North American church we have become OBSESSED WITH THE GIFTS!!!! We have some who worship the money and the health God gave us and others who worship the spiritual gifts, the healings, the tongues, the visions, the insights. WHO IS LEFT WHO LOVES THE GIVER? How can God take glory from our faith? How can he shut the mouths of the mockers, the scoffers, the devils and the liars? He must take our gifts!! TAKE THEM LORD!!! We have worshipped you when you gave us good things, we want to worship you when you give us tribulation! We want to show the world that we love you and not just the good things you have given us! Can you pray that with me? Do you love GOD enough to pray that with me?

¹¹Now when Job's three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, each one came from his own place—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. For they had made an appointment together to come and mourn with him, and to comfort him.

¹²And when they raised their eyes from afar, and did not recognize him, they lifted their voices and wept; and each one tore his robe and sprinkled dust on his head toward heaven.

¹³So they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that *his* grief was very great. (Job 2:1-13. NKJV)

His grief was very great. Bad things really do happen to good people. I've had pastors tell me that they don't believe that real Christians ever suffer. They don't believe that a good Christian will ever suffer illness. If you are sick, its because there is sin in your life and if you repent, it

will go away. Pastors tell me this today. God have mercy on us! Job DID NOT SIN in all of this! The Bible says so. Yet his grief was very great. Dear friends, the Bible does say that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. No true Christian will ever be condemned or sent to hell; I promise you that. But the Bible does not say you will not suffer. Indeed the Bible promises that you will, more than that, it says that these difficulties are not accidental, they ARE YOUR VERY CALLING IN CHRIST! In 1 Peter 2 Peter talks about how Jesus glorified God IN HIS SUFFERINGS and then he says to his readers:

²¹**For to this you were called**, because Christ also suffered for ^fus, leaving ^fus an example, that you should follow His steps (1 Peter 2:21)

Do you see? To this YOU WERE CALLED! If you find yourself giving glory to God by your steadfastness in faith IN TRIAL you are not to say to yourself: “What a strange turn of events, is God still in control?” No!! You are supposed to say: “PRAISE GOD for this opportunity to live out my calling! I am giving God GLORY TODAY! I AM SHUTTING THE MOUTH OF SATAN TODAY! I AM FOLLOWING JESUS TODAY!!!!” God is telling a story to the watching universe and you are playing a leading role. Did you not know this? The Bible says:

I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,
⁹and to make all see what *is* the ^ffellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things ^fthrough Jesus Christ;
¹⁰to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might **be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places**,
¹¹according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,
¹²in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.
¹³Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at **my tribulations for you, which is your glory**. (Ephesians 3:8-13. NKJV)

Paul says that it is the plan of God to display his saving wisdom and power THROUGH THE CHURCH, through his people as they walk with faith, boldness and confidence through tribulation. This is our GLORY. This is how we fulfil our purpose. Tell me church, what is the purpose of man? To GLORIFY GOD by enjoying him forever. TO GLORIFY GOD by enjoying him, by WORSHIPPING him in trial, in tribulation, in prosperity and in poverty, in sickness and in health, in good times and in bad, in blessing and IN SORROW. This is how we show the wisdom, the power, the grace and the majesty of GOD to a watching world. This is how we shut the mouth of the devil and this is how we dispel the lies of the scoffers and the mockers and the accusers of God’s people and God’s purpose. This is why the Book of Job was

so beloved in the believing church my friends! Because it shows us how to walk with God through the valley of the shadow of death and give him glory. Thanks be to God. Jody will you come and lead us?