

A View Behind the Curtain

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Job: View From The Ashes

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Bible Text: Job 1:6-22; Job 2:1-10

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This morning it is my privilege to invite you to open your Bibles to the book of Job, the book of Job probably one of the best known characters and story of all of the Bible but yet one of those characters that oftentimes we spend little attention and because his story at times is so difficult. If this is your first time with us as we walk through the book of Job, it's actually a pretty easy book of the Bible to find, go to the middle of the Bible in what we know as the book of Psalms, go to the left and there for 42 chapters we discover a man who for most in part has everything that he can see and hear and tangibly touch removed from his life. Here is a man who is synonymous with what James 5 calls patience, and Ezekiel 14 says one to remember because of how he lived his life and his trust and faith in spite of the circumstances that were around him.

Today in Job 1 and 2, we're going to read one of the most enlightening passages in all the Bible for all of the story of Job takes place "on the ash heap" from this point forward. We're going to see his life dismantled. We're going to see his friends turn their back against him. But it is in chapter 1 and 2 that we're given a scene, a scene of which that he was not privy to, a conversation of which he was not able to hear. In just a moment we're going to find ourselves in the heavenly realm and there will be not only the Lord himself, the sons of God, one whom we know in the Bible called Satan. Actually what chapters 1 and 2 are for you and I today is a view behind the curtain. When life goes the direction that we desire it not to, what actually is happening behind the scenes. Let me share with you that what we're about to read is not exclusive to Job. Anytime you have a man or a woman of God who is desiring to be as he was, one who feared God and eschewed evil, you can be certain that there is one, as we're about to see in a moment, that would love to accuse us, distract us, and dispel us. You see, this is not just Job's story, I have a feeling this was Noah's story, this was David's story, this was the apostles' story, this was Paul's story. This is your story and this is my story. You see, one of the great things about Job is it's not an exclusive story about an exclusive situation, today we're going to see what happens when we pull the proverbial curtain back and we see what's actually happening behind the scenes of our life.

In Job 1, beginning in verse 6, it says,

6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them. 7 And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. 8 And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? 9 Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? 10 Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. 11 But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. 12 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.

We know the rest of chapter 1, that his 10 children would lose their lives, his livestock, his fortune, everything that was materialistic would be vaporized in a day.

I want you to fast forward to chapter 2, verse 1. It says,

1 Again 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. 2 And the LORD said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. 3 And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause. 4 And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. 5 But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. 6 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life. 7 So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. 8 And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes.

From this point forward we will find ourselves on this famous ash heap, we will have a conversation with Job and his wife, we'll discuss that next week, his friends the following week, and then subsequent conversations where we see him speak from and answer issues from this famous place of life. But here in chapter 1 and 2 we have this "view behind the curtain," and when you've got a passage like this that is so intriguing and at some level so mysterious, I think it behooves us just to kind of walk through it answering those basic questions of life of why does it look the way that it does.

Let's begin with the "when." When does this story take place? Notice what it says in chapter 1, verse 6, as well as chapter 2, verse 1, it says, "And there came a day where the sons of God came before the LORD." I want to be very clear from the beginning what we're seeing here is not a 24/7 experience. In fact, the Bible makes it clear in both accounts that there was a certain day. Now the question is how much time passed between chapter 1 and chapter 2? And to be completely honest with you, nobody knows. There are those who would say that it was as short a time as one week, there would be those who would say that it would be as long as one year. That time frame is going to be critical to our study next week but as for today what we know is this, that the Bible says that there is a very specific time when what you and I know as the "spiritual beings, the sons of God" come and they actually have, for lack of better terms, an audience with the Lord. When does that happen? Obviously somewhat regularly, we're just not told all the details.

But the "who" is critical and you'll notice here that there are those that are in the heavenly realm above and there are those in the earthly realm below. Let's talk about the heavenly because this is where the conversation takes place today. Notice it begins with the sons of God. Don't think son, singular, think sons, plural. In fact, in your Old Testament there are four places where this phrase is utilized: in Genesis 6, the initiation of that famous Noahadic flood story and here in Job 1 and 2 as well as in Job 38. Why is Job 38 so important? Because there when the Lord is questioning Job about his knowledge of the creation, he says, "Were you there when the creative order began and the sons of God celebrated for joy?" Within the book of Job it is conclusive not only where this takes place but who is involved of who these entities are. Here's the question we have. I know it's going to sound really rhetorical but are these the good guys or the bad guys? You say, "What do you mean?" Well, by the time we get to the story here in Job whom we know as Lucifer has fallen, he is called Satan in this passage and the Bible makes it clear that there were those angelic beings that he led astray in his rebellion as well. What we don't know is are these the sons of God that rebelled against God and still have to report to God, or is this a collection of all the angelic beings in all the known universe at some given point in time. We just don't know but we know that whoever they are, they were summoned to the throne of God. Who comes also? Satan. In fact, by the very word that is used, one who is an accuser, one that is a deceiver, we know the one who desires to wreak havoc and bring destruction not only on the creative order but on your life, my life, in this case Job's life is there as well. And then finally, God himself, the one who is the author, the finisher of our faith, and in this story is the one who gives the boundaries for any and all activity. That is critical to an understanding of this story, that whether it be Satan himself, the "sons of God," whoever it may be, nobody is allowed to move an inch without the permissive will of God.

Then we have those below, Job and his "family." The reason I use that term is because everybody who's impacted by this story was a part of his family. Obviously his kids were dramatically impacted. His wife, who we don't hear of in this chapter, is incredibly impacted. His servants would have been like a part of his family, most of them lost their lives. In fact, if you read through chapter 1, these four phases of destruction that come, there's only one person from each phase who somehow survives to come back to tell Job

what took place. All that happened on the earth, the destruction, the despair, everything was a result of the conversation and the allowance that happened with those that were above.

So where did it happen? All the Bible says is before the Lord. It doesn't say that it happened in some remote location of the creative order. Notice that the sons of God and Satan report to where God was, and I know he's omnipresent and I know he is technically everywhere but the Bible gives us evidence that there are strategic locations like his throne that the Bible mentions as being in a stationary place. In other words, what we have as far as a visual for us, it's a horrible example but it's a "good example." I want you to imagine a court scene and you've got those that are pleading their cases and you've got one who is ultimately in authority to determine what will and will not happen and much like what happens here on the earth, those decisions are as to return to give a "report" therein.

Which leads us to the "what." This is the critical part of the passage: what is actually happening and why not only did it happen but why is it important for us to understand what is happening? Three things you need to understand very clearly about this story and the first is access. Now some people struggle with this but according to what we just read, whom we know as Satan not only has access to the "presence of God" but he has access to your life. He has access. Now those of you that might struggle with this, let me remind you there is a passage in Revelation 12 that describes a battle in heaven. It says that there that whom we know as Satan, that old dragon, that he rebels against God and Michael overthrows him and casts him out of heaven. John Milton, a very famous literary figure of days past wrote a book called "Paradise Lost." It's really not a book, it's more a poem, but nonetheless, in that book where he described the fall of man, he placed Revelation 12 as an event in the "past" meaning that "Satan" didn't have access to the throne room in today's world. The problem with that is that Job came after the garden of Eden, and Revelation 12 is really a parenthetical chapter giving us the history of spiritual warfare not just "an initial event of times past." What you and I need to understand is that right now per verse 6 of chapter 1 and verse 1 of chapter 2, there are times where whom we know as the enemy of our soul has access not only to dialog with the Creator of the universe but he has access to discuss your life just as he discussed Job.

Then we have the accusations. Now this is where it gets really interesting because God actually initiates the accusations. Now it's famous here because of what Satan says about Job. We'll get to that in just a moment. What's difficult is we ask ourselves why would God even bring up the subject matter? Why would God even highlight this individual? Can I share with you what I believe the accusation that God is making? He asks Satan, he says, "Where have you been?" Now you do understand he knew where he'd been, right? I mean, he knows everything. In fact, think about the garden of Eden. Remember when Adam and Eve fall into sin and they hide themselves with the fig leaves? What was God's question? Where are you? He knew where they are. He's just simply asking a question for them to state where they are in relationship to him.

Notice that both times when he asked him, "Where have you been?" "Oh, just to and fro in all the earth." And then God says, "Have you considered my servant Job?" And I know this may seem difficult but let me allow to share with you what I believe the accusation God is making. He says, "Okay, you who wanted to 'be in charge' but you've now been relegated to the lake of fire for all eternity, why are you going after low hanging fruit?" Think about that for a moment. Let me put it in our language today. How many times has somebody said, "Why don't you pick on somebody your own size"? You understand when he says going to and fro in all the earth, basically what he was saying is, "All those that are on my side, we've been powwowing together and we've been Kumbayahing together. Man, it's been great." He says, "Do you know what? If you're so big and bad, if you're really all that you claim to be, why don't you go after somebody who actually believes in me? Why don't you go after someone who actually trusts in me? Have you considered my servant Job?" Now before you get upset, you realize that in what we've read today God knew how Job was going to respond. God knew that Job was strong. He knew that he was a man of faith and even though we struggle with what happens, remember chapter 42 is coming.

Then Satan throws out the accusations. What does he say in chapter 1? He says, "The only reason that Job worships you is because you've taken care of him." Let me put that in today's terminology, "The only reason that he goes to church, the only reason he gives, the only reason he serves, the only reason he sings is because he's got a roof over his head, clothes on his back, money in the bank, and food on his table. You take those things away, he's going to curse you to your face."

What happens? It's all removed. We didn't read the passage today but in verse 20 through 22 of chapter 1 what does Job do? He tears his clothes. He says, "From the dust I came, the dust I will return. Blessed be the name of the LORD." So what does Satan do? He ramps it up, so to speak. He comes back and he says, "Do you know what? That wasn't as easy as I thought it was going to be. I'll tell you what," this is in verse 4 of chapter 2, "all that a man has he will give for his life. Allow me to touch his body, his health. Even though he's buried 10 children, even though he's lost his bank account, even though his pension fund is toast, allow me to touch his body," and can I paraphrase, "he won't just curse you to your face, he'll lose his mind." You don't believe this strategy works? Where have you been the last two years? Can I share with you the most godless thing we saw the last two years? It's when we needed God the most, people said don't go and worship him. Have you ever thought about that? We fell into the trap of the accusation. Bring a pandemic and they'll stop. And we did because the same accusation works on us. Can I share with you a harsh reality? I'm not trying to be angry, I'm not trying to be upset, but do you find it odd that people who are destined to go to heaven want to spend more time on earth rather than being with the Lord?

And yet what does Job do? Job says, "Do you know what? Can we not take good at the hand of God and not evil?" Guys, this is like a pandemic on steroids. I mean, he's got open sores, he's got boils, he's scraping himself, he's sitting on the garbage heap of life. He doesn't have the medical facilities we have. He doesn't have the doctors we have. He

doesn't have the medicines we have. This guy's got nothing but a piece of pottery. That's it. And he says, "Do you know what? I'm still good."

So let's look at the actions for a moment. What does Satan do? Anything he's allowed to. You know, there's an old adage, give him an inch, he'll take a yard. That's in reflection to our rebellion against God and our resisting his will in our life, but in here Job it says many times he never sinned with his lips, he never accused God falsely, and so what we discover is that Satan will do all that he is allowed to do. Why is that important? Because nothing befalls us, nothing happens to us, nothing occurs in our life that ever takes God by surprise. In fact, nothing, heartache, pain, misery, destruction, illness, disease, pandemics, bankruptcy, anything that he walked through that you and I would walk through, none of it happens without God's knowledge of, understanding of, and according to what we just read, the permissive will of.

The question isn't the actions of which the enemy is going to take, the question is what are the actions that we're going to take because Job, this is why Ezekiel mentions him, because the Israelites, they're in Babylon, they're worshiping under a false king with a false god, a foreign language, everything that they know and believe and, by the way, you do know for 70 years they didn't have a temple and they didn't have a weekly worship service, they didn't have the ability to do like they'd done for hundreds of years, and they were in despair. So what does Ezekiel say? "Guys, remember Noah, remember Daniel, remember Job," the one who in spite of his circumstances said, "I'll pray anyway. I'll worship anyway. I'll give anyway." His actions, this is what's important, did not change just because his circumstances did. His response to God did not change even though his "world" fell apart. You know, the sad reality for most of us is it doesn't take the loss of our children and the draining of our bank account, it just takes a little bit of bad news, a little bit of inconvenience, a little bit of heartache and all of a sudden, oh my, everything is a disaster.

What did Job do? Job responded, his actions were a model for us. So why, why is this story, why is particularly this passage pulling away the curtains, why is it so important to us? I've already alluded to it but, listen, you need to understand that just like in Job's day and just like in previous days, that the enemy of your soul has access, he has access to accuse you, to say the only reason they go to that church is because they paid the debt off. The only reason that they go is because they can afford the clothes they have on their back. The only reason they go is because the car that they drive. You can fill in the blank for your life, correct? How many times have you found in your life where he's had access not just to the outside of your life but to the innermost thoughts of your life, the things you have said, the things you've spoken, the things you're trusted, and what does he do? He accuses us.

Can I share with you the one accusation that he makes that's probably more powerful than any other one? He accuses you of that which you've done in the past that Jesus has shed his blood and forgiven you of and you can't get over it. You see, it's easy to be forgiven, it's tough to forget. How many times when you get up knowing where you've been, knowing what you've done, knowing your past have you eaten breakfast, gotten dressed

for church, gotten in that car, and Satan says, "How dare you show your face down there? Don't you know what you did 18 years ago? Don't you know what you've said 4 years?" Whatever it may be. What does he do? He continues to bring up our past. He continues to question our motives. That's his accusation. Well, I've got news for you: every time Satan brings up your past, why don't you bring up his future? Because I've got news for the enemy, I may have messed up in the past, you may have messed up in the past, but according to the word of God Jesus shed his blood so I can be seated in the heavens and he's going to be burning in the lake of fire. So who wins "in the end"?

So let's talk about our action for just a moment. I'm going to elicit a statement I've made numerous times throughout the years. I always want to give full credit to whom it came from because it's just that good. Luis Palau, South American evangelist, many people called him the Billy Graham of South America for years, even though his headquarters in North America were in Portland and his ministry continues with his children and such. He was kind of good with these "one-liners" and this was his one-liner, maybe you've heard me use it before, don't worry I'm going to use it again at some point in the future. Here's what he says, he says if we could see with one second the spiritual world that is around us, it would scare the hell out of us. Here's what he was saying: if we could see what happened behind the curtain, if we could see right now the strategy that Satan wants to pour on your life, if we could see right now the destruction that he wants to bring, if we could see right now all that is happening around us, number 1, it should scare the "hell out of us" so that we'd believe on Jesus Christ, for those of us who are saved, if we really could sense what's happening, it ought to cause us to do what Job did, to fall on our knees and say, "Do you know what? Naked I came into the world, naked I'm leaving. Bankrupt I came into the world, bankrupt I'm leaving. Dust to dust, ashes to ashes."

You know, probably the greatest trick that Satan has ever gotten us to fall for and I know there's a lot of them, is that that which we hear, see, touch and handle is actually reality. According to Job 1 and 2, do you know what reality is? It's that spiritual world that we don't see, that we don't hear but is manifested in the physical. Every struggle, every difficulty, every temptation, all those things, all of it originated in the spiritual realm and you and I have the privilege like Job to respond appropriately. The question isn't whether or not he has access, the enemy, the question isn't whether or not he's going to accuse you, the question today is how are you going to respond? What is your action going to be?

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. This morning as we gather not only in person but also online, maybe you're that individual that for whatever reason the Spirit of God took the word of God today and it pierced like that double-edged sword that it claims to be, and maybe today you realized that in spite of all that has and has not happened in your life there's never been that time, there's never been that place where you've called on Jesus Christ to save you. Romans 10 says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. It doesn't say whoever joins a church, it doesn't say whoever goes under water, it doesn't say whoever says this or stops that or starts that. It says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. 1 John 5:12 says whoever has the Son has life and who does not have the Son does not have life. Maybe today is the day for the

very first time in your life you've called on the name of the Lord. If that's you today, it doesn't have to be the words I would say, somebody else would say, this is your heart's cry but maybe this would be your cry to God today. "God, today I recognize I've got a sin problem. I've been places I shouldn't have been. I've done things I shouldn't have done. I've said things I shouldn't have said. And Lord, you know and only you know I have thought things that I shouldn't have thought. God, your word says that that is sin and the wages, the results of my sin is death, but you also said but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Today, God, I'm crying out, I'm confessing I've got a sin problem that only Jesus can fix. God, I believe, I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much he came on my behalf, he lived a sinless life on my behalf, he went to the cross and he bore the punishment of my sin on my behalf and, God, I believe he rose from the grave so that my sin could be forgiven and my soul could be saved. God, today I don't have all the answers to the problems and the struggles of this world and even my own life, but there is one thing I know, I know I've got a sin problem, I've got a rebellion problem that only Jesus Christ can solve. The best way I know how, I'm asking you to forgive me, I'm asking you to save me, I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, maybe you're that person today who had that conversation with the Lord. In just a moment I'm going to pray for us, we're going to stand and we're going to sing together and we just want to invite you just to step out and step forward. We'd love to celebrate with you. We'd love to pray with you. We'd love to pray for you. But maybe today you say, "You know, I've already made that decision." Maybe you've never followed in believer's baptism and maybe you have and the Lord has said this is the family of faith you're to be a part of, whatever the decision is we just want to welcome you and celebrate what God is doing in your life. Or maybe today you say, "Do you know what, pastor? I've got all that covered. I don't need to step out, I don't need to step forward." Well, in just a moment you're going to step out of this room and the question is going not to be if Satan will accuse you because he will, the question is how will you respond?

Lord Jesus, as we come to this time of decision, God, thank you, thank you that in spite of our circumstances, God, thank you in spite of the environment we live in that you have shown us through your word, you've shown us through Job that you are faithful when we can't see you move, that, God, you are constant when we can't feel you, that, God, you are of mercy and you are of grace and you are of love and compassion even when we don't see, hear or sense any of it. God, we thank you today that chapters 1 and 2 of Job are not the final story, they're just the beginning. God, we thank you in advance for chapter 42 that, God, you see the big picture and we don't. God, help us today even though we don't see it and we may not be able to hear it, help us today like Job just to trust you this day. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.