

Sunday June 12th sermon: "Comfort for Troubled Saints - God is in Control!"

Preached at the Lord's Table at Grace Bible Church in Greenwood, MS, by John Pittman Hey

Job 1:8-12; Job 1:20-22

God's word proclaims that He has all power and controls all things that come to pass.

Christ upholds all things by the word of His power! In Him we live, and move, and have our existence. By Christ all things were created and are held together.

The book of Job is an early writing that demonstrates these truths.

God rules! God is in control!

How often we forget these truths when we are in trouble, or cast down, or in great distress.

When we are in crisis, and things seem to be piling upon us, we often think that the devil is besieging us from all sides.

Our families are divided and fighting, our kids are falling into sin and trouble, or we are sick, miserable, or broke.

Through all this, we must trust that our God rules in all things!

None of these things are happening because God has lost control. Rather, God Himself takes the credit for bringing these things into our lives for His noble and glorious purposes, though we cannot fathom what they might be.

The devil is not in control. Rather, God is in complete control of the devil. God will work all things together for our good, for we trust in Him.

No matter how bad our lot seems now, one day we will come to agree that God has done the best for us.

Job is a great example of this truth. The backstory, which Job did not then know, is that Satan mocked his faithfulness to God, and God took away all that Job treasured, to test Job, to humiliate Satan, and to demonstrate God's utter control over everything.

At all times, Satan was under God's rule, even as Satan sought Job's harm.

When we are in trouble, it may well be that the devil is attacking us, but God always has a tight rein on him!

Satan has no independent power to run amok and harm the Lord's people!

Job had no idea of Satan's part in all the evil that befell him, but he knew that God was in control. Job was devastated, and he stated that God had "taken away" those most loved things, but he worshiped God anyway.

In fact, God placed His stamp of approval on Job's testimony that God was the ultimate cause of all the evil. God declared that this was no false accusation by Job against God, nor was it a foolish charge against God.

Sadly, most American Christians would find Job's belief, and God's approval of it, most astounding. We are so used to being comfortable and blessed, that we cannot grasp how God is the cause of evil as well as good. But the saints in olden times, and in third world countries today, are in much harder circumstances, and God's providence in all things is a reality to them.

Things got worse for Job, as Satan was dissatisfied with Job's steadfastness. Now God used Satan to afflict poor Job with terrible sores all over his body. God acknowledges that He is the cause of this evil that is done to Job, using Satan as an instrument of affliction and testing.

Satan is involved, but God takes the credit for destroying Job, and Job once again agrees.

Things get even worse when Job's friends show up. After they mourn with Job for a week, they commence to blame Job for his troubles, accusing him of some secret sin, and exhorting him to repent.

They claim that the righteous are never treated this way by God!

Here we see the same false teaching that is prevalent today. False teachers say that if you will only have faith, and tithe, and attend to their teaching, you will have nothing but blessings from God, and when things go bad, it must be something you did wrong to deserve it.

They do not understand what Job knew, and what God agreed with, that all things are ultimately caused by God, and nothing happens that God doesn't ordain, uphold, and sustain Himself, and that sorrow and loss are not always due to some sin in the poor recipient.

Job rightly contests his friends' accusation of wrongdoing, but he also complains that he does not understand why God has done these evil things to him.

The book of Job continues for 33 chapters with Job and his friends arguing about why God caused these disasters to fall upon Job.

When God finally answers Job and his friends, God takes credit for the entire world and the way it operates.

God has all power, and all prudence and judgment.

Nobody has a right to cross-question God!

God argues that if we cannot explain in meticulous detail how God created all things, and runs all things, then we need to shut our mouths against Him.

God's defense of Himself in Job directly agrees with Paul's teaching about the sustaining and upholding power by which He rules the universe.

Job has learned his lesson. He says he will put his hand over his mouth.

Now that Job has learned his lesson, and Satan has been humiliated, and God has fully vindicated Himself, God then restores Job to a better place, and all his friends return to him and rejoice with him.

All the while, Job's great faith in God was undisturbed. Job declared what he believed, that His Redeemer lives!

Not only so, but Job believed that he will be raised from the dead one day, and will see His Redeemer standing on this earth at the end of days, and that Job's body will be restored so that he will see His Redeemer with his very own eyes. The thought of it takes Job's breath away!

What the disciples of Jesus went through when He went to the cross is a great example and encouragement to the saints in all times.

In truth, there is absolutely nothing we can suffer in our tribulations that can begin to compare with the sorrow of the disciples.

Their Messiah was put to death, defeated, and all their hopes dashed. They thought that Jesus would set up His rule and rescue Israel from the Roman tyrants.

But now, Christ is dead, and how can a dead man save anybody?

No wonder Peter denied Christ! We have not been through the terror and loss that he and the others were facing.

But the Lord Jesus told Peter he would deny Him that very evening. Peter, of course, denied it vehemently.

But then Jesus described how Satan wanted to attack Peter, but He, the Savior, had prayed for Peter, that his faith not fail.

Here is Christ's promise to us all: we will go through great tribulations in our lives, but Christ will not permit our faith to be lost.

Just as Job's faith was never shattered, neither shall the faith of any of the Lord's people be destroyed by the worst evils that befall us.

The disciples didn't understand at all why God would destroy Jesus on the cross. God delivered Him up for our offenses. God poured out His wrath against Jesus for our crimes laid upon Him there.

No doubt the disciples prayed and hoped that God would deliver Christ, just like we pray and hope God will deliver us from our troubles.

But God wouldn't deliver His Son from the cross. The wicked rulers taunted Jesus as He hung there in shame and agony, that God had deserted Him, and would not save Him.

Why did God bring such horrors upon His Son our Lord Jesus?

Because God was accomplishing our redemption and bringing poor sinners everlasting life!

It mattered not that the disciples misunderstood God's purposes. Like Job, they had no idea what was really going down!

So too, no telling what God is accomplishing in our troubles, when they continue on and on, after we have begged for deliverance.

Our troubles are nothing compared to Christ's troubles at Calvary!

Our troubles are nothing compared to what Christ's disciples went through.

But we know that God works all things together for good to those who love Him, to those chosen according to God's eternal purposes!

Job's troubles happened to test Job, and to reveal God's absolute control over all things, and to provide us an example of God's providence in our troubles.

So when we are tried and perplexed, we must look to the troubles of the disciples, look to the troubles of Job, and look to the troubles of Jesus, and consider the glorious outcomes wrought by God in each case!

Our very salvation came through great troubles beforehand, and God will surely set us free from ours also one day soon.