

What Do You Do When You Can't Find God?

by Greg Locke

In times of suffering, like Job, we must seek God and trust in His purpose even when we feel abandoned.

Duration: 51:49

Scripture: Joshua 1:8, Psalm 1:2, Psalm 119:9, Jeremiah 20:9, Hebrews 4:12, James 1:22

Topics: "Faithfulness In Suffering", "Persevering Through Trials"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of Job and the trials he faced. Job experienced great loss, including the death of his family, financial ruin, and the betrayal of his friends. Even his own wife turned against him, urging him to curse God and die. Despite all of this, Job remained steadfast in his faith and refused to turn away from God. The preacher emphasizes the importance of not just hearing the word of God, but also putting it into action and remaining faithful in the face of adversity.

Transcript

Open your Bibles please to the 23rd chapter of the book of Job. Job chapter number 23 tonight in your Bibles please. Job chapter number 23.

A lot of times when the Robertsons are with us I'll ask for the dole sometime either over dinner before we have the service that night or sometime throughout the day. He'll ask me, what do you think you're preaching on? I'll ask him, what do you think the family will be singing? And we've done that several times even in the staff training but we failed to do that today. And I believe I know why because the Lord could not have fit a song and a message from the Word of God together more reverently if you will than He has tonight.

I was poring over the book of Job tonight. I have several messages that I've preached out of the book of Job. But I was in the office in a little trailer today and I was poring over it there and I was reading Job chapter number 23 and I'm not exactly sure why the Lord directed me there.

But as I began to read it, it just kind of began to unfold and outline itself before my eyes and in my heart and so this is just as new to me tonight as it is to you. But I feel that the Lord knows exactly that somebody in this auditorium needs this message tonight no doubt because He's taken the music and He's taken the message of God's Word and He's put it together like a hand in glove. So I hope it'll be a blessing to you.

I hope it'll be a comfort to you. But yet I hope it'll be something that is convicting and something that is impacting to your life as well. And this is one of those messages that God first really works the preacher over before He's able to get in the pulpit and preach to other people about it.

And so I hope tonight that you'll take some handy dandy notes down, write some things down in your Bible because I believe it'll help you tonight. Job chapter 23, let's stand please. Out of respect for God's Word.

17 verses long, I'll read the entire chapter. Job chapter number 23 and verse number 1. The Bible says, Then Job answered and said, Even today, as my complaining bidder, my stroke is heavier than my groaning. Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat.

I would order my cause before him and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words which he would answer me and understand what he would say unto me Will he plead against me with his great power? No. But he would put strength in me.

Verse 7, There the righteous might dispute with him. So should I be delivered forever from my judge. Behold, I go forward, but he is not there.

And backward, but I cannot perceive him. On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him. He hideth himself on the right hand, but I cannot see him.

But he knoweth the way that I take. And when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot hath held his steps.

His way have I kept and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandments of his lips. I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.

Verse 13, But he is of one mind, and who can turn him? And what his soul desireth, even that he doeth. For he performeth a thing that is appointed for me, and many such things are with him. Therefore am I troubled at his presence, when I consider I am afraid of him.

For God maketh my heart soft, and the Almighty troubleth me. Because I was not cut off before the darkness, neither hath he covered the darkness from my face. Please go back to verse number 3 again.

Verse number 3 of Job 23, where he lifts up his voice and he says, Oh, that I knew where I might find him. But tonight I want to bring the simple message. What do you do when you can't find God? I think I want you to maybe seated and let's bow our heads in hearts.

And let's pray and ask the Lord to bless our time together tonight. Lord, we thank you for the day and for the great things that we've been able to accomplish. For your glory, it's been a profitable day, and for that we're grateful.

Lord, tonight our hearts are ready for the service. And I pray, Lord, that as we've had the singing, as the choir has sung so beautifully, and we thank you for that. But, Lord, as we've had the fellowship, we've had announcements, we've had offerings, we've had all of these things.

But, Lord, tonight our hearts need to be in tune with thy precious word. So, Father, I pray that you would remove all the distractions, the discouragements and the things that would deviate our hearts and minds and eyes from the Word of God for the next few moments. And you would help this congregation as they listen to the Bible.

And, Father, help me as I preach this message that you've laid upon my heart. And, Lord, we thank you for the testimony, for the character, the life and the admonition of a man by the name of Job. And I pray tonight that it would challenge us greatly to want to do more for the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we do realize that troublesome times come. And so tonight, would you allow us to keep this message burning within our hearts that truly when these trials do come, we'll be able to still glorify God. And as the Bible says twice about Job, he did not sin foolishly with his lips against God.

So, Lord, help me tonight as I preach. And please help these, my hearers, as they listen. And we'll thank you for everything that you'll say and do, for it's in Jesus' name that we pray.

Amen. Years ago, St. Augustine was the one that said, God had only one son without sin, but never a son without suffering. And certainly the book of Job is a great amalgamation of all the turmoil, of all the suffering and of all the hardships that God's people is going to have to face.

You know us being in Bible college, I'm sure you study your Bible long enough and you'll find out that the book of Job is the oldest book in your Bible. It is pre-flood, it is pre-law. In Job 1, just to have a quick rundown and overview of the book, we find out in Job 1, there was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job.

And that man was perfect and feared God, one that eschewed evil. And the Bible says that it repeats the same thing in verse 8, and then repeats the very same character and testimony in chapter 2 and verse 3. But although we have his testimony in chapter 1, we also have the first of a series of two trials that is in his life. Number 1, we find out that he loses his finances.

Number 2, we find out that he loses his seven children or his family. And then in chapter 2, we have two more trials that are yet Job has to face. We see that the devil once again goes before the presence of Almighty God on His throne.

And he said, yea, skin for skin, a man will give all that he has for his own life. And God said, you go down and touch his body, but you cannot touch his life. You cannot kill him, if you will.

And so the Bible says that Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord and he smote Job with sore boils from the top of his head to the sole of his feet. And now we see that he was afflicted in his flesh. But then your Bible tells me that he was also afflicted in his friends.

For the three friends, those miserable comforters, who were supposed to be a great comfort, those who went to college with him, if you will, those who he knew very well, they saw him, they lifted up their voices, for seven days they sat down, the Bible says they wept, and nobody even opened their mouth. And that must have put a very grueling and bad, terrible situation for four buddies to get together and nobody to say anything to one another for seven full days. But yet then the Bible says at the end of chapter 2 that here his own friends turn against him.

If that's not bad enough, losing most of your family, your finances, your flesh and your friends, his own wife even turns against him. And she says, do you still retain your integrity? She said, why don't you look at yourself, Job? Why don't you take a good close look in the mirror, son? Why don't you just curse God and die? And he said, you speak like one of the foolish ladies. He said, what? Shall we receive good at the hand of God and also not receive evil? He said, you speak like a lost woman, and it's a pretty bad faith when lost people can suffer trials and go through trials better than God's people can go through trials.

And Job said, what's your problem? He said, listen, you're suffering as if you were a lost person. He said, we must receive good at the hand of God, but sometimes we also receive hardships, what he referred to as evil things at the hand of God. It got so bad at the end of chapter 2 that you read chapter 3 and you will find out that Job cursed the day in which he was born.

He was in utter despair. He was in utter disrelevance. I mean, you talk about the bottom of the barrel, friend.

He was scraping the bottom thereof. He was in complete turmoil. And he cursed the very day in which he walked forth from the womb of his mother.

In chapters 4 and 5, we have two chapters that deal with the same person. It is a gentleman by the name of Eliphaz the Timnite. Now, Mr. Eliphaz the Timnite was supposed to be a friend.

He was supposed to be a comforter, but he began to ridicule and he began to say that Job had sin in his life. In chapter 6 and 7, we find out that Job gives a rebuttal, if you will. He rebukes this guy for all of his vain words.

And he rebukes him for saying that he has sin in his life, and he's trying to declare his innocence. In chapter number 8, we see that then a young man by the name of Beeldad opens his mouth and he begins to accuse Job of having sin in his life. And then in chapter number 9 and chapter number 10, we see that Job also gives a rebuttal and a reputation of that which he had to say.

Then in chapter number 11, to top things off, Zophar the Naamathite had to open his mouth and he then began to say that you've got sin in your life, that you've been doing things that are wrong. In chapter number 12 through chapter 14, he does not answer Zophar, you read your Bible, he answers all three of them. He calls them all vain.

He gets to the place basically where he says, listen, you're a bunch of miserable comforters. I'd have done a whole lot better if you'd never even showed up to begin with. I've lost my flesh, I've lost my family, and here I am about to lose all of my finances.

It's gone and now my own friends have turned on me. And he answers all of them in those few chapters. Then in chapter number 15, chapter number 16, chapter number 17, and chapter number 18, it all starts over again.

They all start ridiculing him, he fights back. They ridicule him, he fights back. They ridicule him, he fights back.

Then in chapter number 19, he changes his tactics. He does not give a refutation to that which they said, but in Job chapter number 19, he begins to declare his faith and he says, I know that my Redeemer liveth. Then in Job chapter 20 and Job chapter 21, chapter 22, we see that Job again begins to go back to refuting what these men are saying.

You will find out that Zophar the Namathite, that Bildad the Shuhite, and that Eliphaz the Timonite, all three of them, each speak against Job three different times. Then in Job chapter number 23 and chapter 24, we have two paramount portions of Scripture. That's where we are tonight.

In Job chapter number 23, he is longing to see God like he's never seen Him before. He is searching for God. He is trying to find God in all of these trials, in all of this heartache, in all of this discouragement that he's in, and he's seeking for God.

And as we read a moment ago in verse number 3, it was very obvious that it seemed like to him in his humanity that he could not find Him. In chapter number 25, we have the shortest chapter in the book of Job. It is six verses long.

And again, Eliphaz and others begin to ridicule him. Then in chapters 26 through chapter number 31, there is another young man who has not been named beforehand. His name is Elihu.

There are two reasons that Elihu did not speak according to the Bible. Number one, he had not yet spoken because he was the younger of the other three. Actually, four of that was there.

We find that out. He was the youngest, and since he was the youngest, he was going to let these aged, wiser men speak. But then his wrath began to be kindled in his heart, and for all of those chapters, he had a twofold pronouncement.

You know what it was? Number one, he rebuked Job for defending himself, and he rebuked Job for glorifying himself. But secondly, he rebuked the other three buddies, those miserable comforters who were not comforters at all, he rebuked them for bringing allegations against Job without having any proof or any factuality whatsoever. Then in chapter number 32 through chapter number 38, we see that they continually have this speech, and it goes on and it goes on, and it's just kind of endless.

But yet in chapter 38 through chapter number 41, the story changes because then God steps on the scene. And in Job chapter 38 through Job chapter number 41, you will find out that God begins to speak to Job out of the whirlwind. And here Job is astounded.

He sits back, his eyes are bugged open. I mean, God parts his hair right down the middle and asks him, if you were to circle the question marks in Job 38 through Job 41, you will find that there are 84 questions that God asked to Mr. Job. And you will find out that for most of them, there is no answer whatsoever.

I call it the 84 question quiz. And so God gives him the SAT, if you will, and God gives him the big math quiz, asks him 84 undeniable, irrefutable questions that Job simply cannot answer. And then at the end of that, Job realizes that he's had pity upon himself.

And in chapter number 42, the last chapter of the book, we have three great things that happen in that chapter. Number one, he glorifies God. Number two, the critics are silenced and judged.

And number three, God honors him greatly. And the Bible says that the latter end of Job was greater than the first. And in Job 42, verse number 17, the Bible says, so Job died being old and full of days.

And so God blessed him in a great way. But no doubt, as I made the statement last night, the bottom of Job's boat did not fall out. Both ends of the bottoms of Job's boat fell out.

I mean the front and the back. Here is a guy that is the epitome of God's people going through heartaches and going through trials. Look at your Bibles if you would.

We're going to go through chapter number 23. I'll give you just a few thoughts and we'll be through, alright? Job chapter number 23. Look what he says in verse number 1. Then Job answered and said... So

he's talking again back to Eliphaz and the rest of those rebels that are rebuking him.

Then Job answered and said, even today is my complaint bitter. My stroke is heavier than my groaning. All that I knew where I might find Him.

Who is he talking about? He's talking about God. He is looking for the Lord in the midst of all this heartache. He is looking for the Lord in the midst of all of his trials, in the midst of all of his discouragement, and he says, all that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat.

That is an interesting phrase. He's not talking about coming and finding some little seat that God's sitting in. He's literally talking about the throne.

He says, I want to appear before the very throne of God that I might give Him my complaint, that I might plead my cause before the great Judge. Where is He when I need Him in this awful time? Where is He when my heart is filled with discouragement and my heart is filled with bitterness, and it seems like the world has turned their backs and forsaken me? Job even said it one time, that my breath is strange to my wife. You ever thought about that? Job said, I have been so forsaken by people that my breath is strange to my wife.

He said, I can't even lean on my wife. I can't even lean on my friends. He said, I have nobody, and now it seems like God is a million miles away.

He said, men, I'd love to come before His seat and plead my cause. Look in your Bibles at verse 4. He said, I would order my cause before Him and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words which He would answer me and understand what He would say unto me.

Will He plead against me with His great power? No. But He would put strength in me. What he's saying is this, is God trying to use His power against me? No, no.

He's trying to use His power for me. He's saying, listen, all of this is for a purpose. All of this is for a reason.

There's a reason that I'm going through this hardship. There's a reason that I'm going through these trials. And Job is scratching his head, and he's just about ready to pull his hair out, and he said, but I sure do wish I could figure out what the reason was.

Let's keep reading, please. Verse 7, it says, that there the righteous might dispute with Him. So should I be delivered forever from my judge.

Verse 8, Behold, I go forward, but He is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive Him. On the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him. He hideth Himself on the right, that I cannot see Him.

Job said, listen, when I'm progressing in my spiritual walk, when I'm looking to God and I'm doing what's right and I'm walking in the path of righteousness, when I'm trotting upon the highway of holiness, He said, I can't even find God in all of this trouble. He said, if I look to my left where God is working, I do not see Him there. Although it's evident that He's working in my life, I just can't sense His presence.

He said, I look to the right, and He says, I cannot find Him. He said, I look before me, I look behind me. He said, it's almost like God's playing hide and go seek.

And He says, Lord, I just don't quite understand where You are. I just don't quite understand why that You're doing this. Why am I going through all of this linicule? And I'll be honest with you, because you live the Christian life long enough and you'll just about be ready to pull your hair out sometimes and you'll think to yourself, Dear Lord, why? Why is it that I'm going through these troubles and why does it seem like Your presence and Your power is a billion miles away? Where are You when I need You most? And I'll be honest with you, even as the psalmist, the sweet shepherd of Israel, David, he even thought sometimes that God hid His face from him.

He said, I will be satisfied when I awake with that likeness. But yet in the same chapter, he said, there's sometimes when God hides Himself in the shadows, when God withdraws Himself and puts Himself in the darkness, and it's hard for us to understand why we're going through these troubles. But right in the midst of friends forsaking Him, right in the midst of this attitude of rebellion that had crept up in His friends, and they were pointing the fingers and they said, Listen, you're wicked.

You've broken the covenant of God. You've been ungodly. Perhaps you've cheated on your wife or you've been rebellious.

You've been a drunkard. I mean, they just gave him all kinds of things. They even used oriental proverbs to try to prove their unscriptural point.

You've got to be careful, fellows, when you're preaching out of the book of Job because if you're not careful, you're going to end up preaching something you don't mean to preach. Let me tell you what I mean. A lot of the things that Eliphaz, that Zophar, that Bildad said were very unscriptural.

Although they are contained for us in the Word of God, what they were saying and the logic that they were using was very much wrong. It was very ungodly. They were using proverbs that weren't from the Bible.

They were using traditionalism and they were using their rational, logical thinking, but yet it was very, very unscriptural what they were doing. And so Job said, listen, everybody's turned against me. Everybody's forsaken me.

My wife's not helping me in this. I'm to the bottom of the barrel when it comes to the bank. I have no money.

I just about have no flesh left. He says, Lord, where are You in all of this? But I want to show you what Job did when it seemed like he couldn't find God. Look in your Bibles, if you would please, at Job 23 and verse 11.

Job 23 and verse 11. The Bible says, My foot hath held His steps. His way have I kept and not declined.

I want to remind you, he is speaking to his buddies. He's declaring his innocence and his faithfulness and his utmost reverence for God. My foot hath held His steps.

His way have I kept and not declined. Verse 12, Neither have I gone back from the commandment of His lips. I want you to see number one.

When Job could not find God seemingly, first and foremost, he was committed to keep doing right. Did you get that? He was committed to keep doing right. Here all of his buddies sat around Indian style, if you will, and they were sitting there and they were talking and they were reminiscing about the past.

And they said, You know what, Job? It's obvious, son, that you've got sin in your life because God would not be judging you if you did not. It's obvious that there's things wrong in your life and they kept trying to draw all these logical conclusions. Well, if you study the Bible, you'll find out they were greatly illogical.

But yet, they were trying to allow Job to search himself. They were probing his heart, trying to make him actually and honestly believe that there was sin in his life. And Job said, Listen, fellas, I've had enough of this business.

Just sit there. Keep your mouth shut. I'm going to tell you something.

Although I can't find God in this, and although I can't understand this, he said, I am committed to keep on doing right even if it kills me. You know, he said the same thing in Job 13, 15. He said, Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.

But I will maintain my ways before Him. What was Job saying? He said, Listen, although I can't see God in all of this, although I'm having troubles and trials, and although this is coming upon me and to me it seems unfair, if you will, he said, My feet have clung to His commandments. I have listened to the commandments of His lips.

My feet have not slid away from that which is right. He said, I am committed to keep on doing right. I'm going to hunker down.

I'm going to stay in the Word of God. I'm going to fight as we talked and preached about last night. And he says, No matter what happens, you can ridicule me.

You can turn against me. I may never get my family back. I may never get my finances back.

My flesh may always be riddled with boils. He said, But I am committed to doing right. Now, friend, that right there is backbone.

That right there is grit, gall, and courage, and that courage can only be given by the great Spirit of Almighty God. And here is a man who says, Listen, I do not care what the trials are. I do not care what the hardships are.

He says, My feet have not slipped. He said, I am committed to continually doing what is right. As Dr. Bob Jones, Jr. used to get in that pool pit, and he said, Do right, do right, do right, till the stars fall.

What was he trying to illustrate? What was it that he was trying to give the world of young people who he was preaching to on that day to understand? That no matter what happens in life, and no matter if the stock market crashes, no matter what happens in the White House, in the church house, or at your and our house, he says, Listen, just keep on doing right for the glory of God. And here is a man that said, I am committed. I am determined.

I am not going to turn back. Though none may join me, still I will follow. And Job was committed.

Even when he couldn't find God, even when his heart was seemingly going to burst within his chest, Job said, My feet have not slipped. I have not altered my ways, if you will, from the commandments of His lips. He said, I will do what's right.

You know the first thing you're supposed to do when you go through trials? Just commit that you're going to keep on doing right. Just commit that you're going to keep on serving the Lord when it gets a little tough this summer. And even when it gets tough out of the summer, you say, Well, I'll be honest with you, Brother Locke, I'm not going to do a trial, and I don't need this message.

You better tuck it away in your pocket, friend, because you'll be put out before the summer's over. I promise you that right now. You will go through trials.

I believe it was C.H. Virgin, perhaps D.L. Moody. I don't remember my reading, but they said this. They said either, Number one, you are going into a trial.

Number two, you are in a trial right now. Or number three, you are just coming out of a trial. But the Christian life is a life of ups and downs.

The Christian life is a rollercoaster effect ride, if you will. There are times when, man, it is going well, but yet there are those refining times that the Robertsons sing about, when in those times, we must be just as committed and just as dedicated to serve Him in the good times, and just as dedicated to serve Him as well in the bad times and in the off times. So Job said, Listen, I'm dedicated.

I'm committed here. My feet are not going to slip. Look at verse number 12, if you would, please, again.

Not only has he said in verse 12, Neither have I gone back from the commandment of His lips, but he also said, I have esteemed the words, get it, of His mouth. Who is he speaking about? Almighty God, obviously. I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.

Number one, he was committed to keep doing right, but number two, he was confident that the Word of God was true and faithful. Here is a man that in the midst of utter discouragement, here is a man that right in the midst of utter despair, he says, Fellas, I want you and all the world to know, I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food, which I have to have to live on a daily, daily basis. Have you ever thought about food? Some of you think too much about food, but have you ever thought about food for just a moment? You think about something.

Food is necessary to your life. I mean, you've got to have certain type of nutrients in your body if you're going to survive. I mean, I'm not a real big breakfast eater.

My breakfast consists of about a pot of coffee. I enjoy coffee. I like it.

You say, that's wicked. Well, amen, it doesn't make any difference. I still like coffee.

But nonetheless, coffee is good. I really enjoy it. I suppose if I'm hungry, I can eat scrambled eggs.

I'm one of these guys that likes breakfast in the middle of the night. I like breakfast food at 12 o'clock at night. That's why I love the Waffle House.

I call it the awful house, but I like to stop there at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning, eat something off a greasy spoon. I love it. But nonetheless, food is good for you.

There's some food that's not. I'm a noodle lover. I love noodles any way you can give them to me, any way you can slice them, any way you can dice them.

I've had noodles 2 or 3 times today, and I could probably have noodles 2 or 3 times before I go to bed. I enjoy noodles. Now, I know that's probably not the healthiest diet in all of the world, but the truth of the matter is this.

It does have some type of nutrition to my body, I'm sure, because I'm still breathing. I'm still ticking. But you've got to have vitamin A. You've got to have vitamin B. You've got to have vitamin C. And you've got to have all type of nutrients.

You just think about food. I mean, food is good for you. Most people like to eat, and that shows by our lifestyle, and it shows by our demeanor.

But you know what Job said? He wasn't negating the fact that food was good. He didn't say that I hate all food. He didn't say that at all.

I'm sure Job loved a good Papa John's pizza every now and then if somebody would deliver it to his doorstep there in the Middle Eastern desert. But I'll be honest with you, he did not say that I hate food. He just said in the midst of this trial, in the midst of this discouragement, he said, I have esteemed the words of God's mouth, the very Word of God, more than the food which is necessary for my daily living, for my bodily strength, for the nutrition that I need to keep going.

He said right now, I have got to the place where not only am I committed to do right, he said, but I am confident that God's Word is going to pull me through this trial. You know, there's only one thing that'll get you through hard times. Now, friends can be a comfort if they're true friends indeed and they can help you through.

Family can be a comfort and they can pull you through and they can help you indeed, thank God for that. But I'm telling you, there's only one real thing that you can base your faith on when it comes to real rough times and trials. There's only one thing that is going to keep you above water, if you will, and that is the rock bed, solid foundation, the anchor, the anvil of the Word of God.

You know what Job said? He said, Listen, I am convinced of the fact that if I stay in the Word of God, if I get my nose out of the newspaper and put it into the Bible, I am convinced that if I esteem the words of His mouth more than my necessary food, that He will bring me through to the other side and He was confident in the Word of God. And how God's people have lost their confidence in the Bible in the day and age in which we live. We think, as I preached on last night, that the only thing we use the Bible for is just to read a little bit.

Preachers get up there, they loosen their tie, they take off their shoes, get in the microphone, spit and holler and yell, get red in the face and everybody gets right with God and gets saved. That's the only thing the Bible's good for. The only thing the Bible's good for is a little bit of memorization.

But can I remind you, James 1, verse 22, Be ye doers of the Word and not hearers only. Joshua 1, verse 8. Do you remember what happened in the first part of Joshua? The Bible says, Moses, my servant is dead. And Joshua, the son of Nun, now took about four million rebellious Jews, led them around in the wilderness, and it was his job to remove them, take them across the Jericho to the Jordan River into the first place called Gilgal, the first place in the Promised Land, and bring them into Canaan Land, the land flowing with the milk and honey where they drove out the giants and they had the great grapes and everything that was there.

And now it was Joshua's responsibility that Moses, the servant of God, was dead because you remember the end of the life of Moses. God said, you can look in off of Mount Nebo, but son, you can't go in because of your utter rebellious and your disobedience to Me because you smoked the rock twice when I told you to smite it once and speak to it once. And so nonetheless, we know the story in verse number 7 of Joshua 1. You can almost sense the utter discouragement that is in the heart of Joshua.

And he says, Fear not, Joshua, as I was with Moses, so will I be with thee. Then verse number 8. I love this verse. This book of the law.

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth. Thou shalt meditate therein day and night that thou mayest observe and do according to all that is written therein. For then thou shalt make thy way prosperous and then thou shalt have good success.

I sat in this morning on the task force chapel when Brother Norris got in. He began to preach and he began to teach on the importance of the Word of God and how we should devour the Word of God. And he quoted Psalm 1. Blessed is the man that walketh not on the couch of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

His delight is in the law of the Lord. And in His law doth he meditate day and night. He should be like a tree planted, rooted down, if you will, planted by the rivers of water that bringeth forth His fruit and His seeds.

And His leaf also shall not wither in whatsoever He doeth shall prosper. Verse 4, The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore, the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish. Have you ever thought about why in the very first Psalm, in the Hebrew hymn book of your Old Testament Bible, have you ever thought about why in verse 4 and in verse 6 of the opening chorus that David called those people ungodly? Have you ever wondered that? Have you ever wondered why he called them ungodly and said twice why they were going to perish? You study the context of Psalm 1. It was because of their attitude towards the law of God. Jesus said in John 17, 17, Sanctify them, Father, through Thy truth.

Why? Thy Word is truth. A verse you're going to know and a verse your teenagers and your young people are going to know all summer long. Ephesians 6, 17, The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

The Bible says in Jeremiah 15, 16, Thy words were found and I did eat them. They were unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart. For I am called by Thy name, O Lord, God of hosts.

Jeremiah 20, 9, It is not my word like unto a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces and like a great fire. The Bible goes on and tells us in Hebrews 4, 12, The Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the biting of slender and swollen spirit, and of the joints and the marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and the intents of the heart. Psalm 119.

Did you know there's 176 verses for him? And every single one of them have one theme. Psalm 119, verse 9, Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way by taking heed according to thy word. Isaiah 40, 8, The grass withers and the flower thereof fadeth away, but the Word of our God abideth forever.

And God liked that verse so much, He repeated it again in 1 Peter 1, 16. And friend, I've got news for you. You can, in trials and out of trials, be confident of the fact that God's Word is true, that God's Word is

faithful, and if you sing the words of His mouth more than your necessary food, you get your spiritual nutrients and your spiritual roots deep down into the soil of the Word of God, and I promise you, God will bring you through to the other side.

And Job said, I keep doing right. And he said, I am convinced of the fact that God's Word is true and God's Word is faithful. And he said, you may ridicule me.

The world may ridicule me. He said, everything may pass away and there may be nothing left. He said, but I'll have one thing left and that is the precious words of His mouth.

How much do you esteem the Word of God? Let's just get real bold and plain about it. How much do you really love the Word of God? You come to a Bible camp just because you feel like coming to a Bible camp? You go to a Bible college just because mom and dad put the bill for a Bible college? Or do you go to a Bible college and come to a Bible camp so you can be a Bible believer? I wouldn't give you the flip of a wooden nickel for somebody that always walks around, they talk about how much they love God and how much they love Jesus Christ and how much they want to do what's right, but they're not avid students of the Word of God. Hey, friend, that's a contradiction.

You know what Jesus said? If you love Me, say it with me, keep My commandments. Can I ask you a simple heavenly question? How are you going to know the commandments if you're not reading them in the Word of God? And don't tell me that you love God, but yet you don't esteem the Word of God greatly in your life. And Job said, fellows, you can say anything about me you want to.

The tabloids can write things about me and you can put me in the U.S. today, the Time, the News, the U.S. In World Report, whatever you want to put me in. He said, I could give a flip. He said, it doesn't make any difference.

He said, I'm going to tell you something, fellows, I'm committed to do right and I'm convinced that the Word of God is completely, totally true and faithful. It will bring me through to the other side. Keep reading your Bibles if you would, please.

Chapter number 23. Not only was he committed, not only was he confident, but I want you to see thirdly that he was content that God was in control. He was content that God was in control.

Say, what do you mean? Let me share what I mean. Chapter number 23 and verse number 13. It says, but He, obviously God, but He is in one mind and who can turn Him? And what His soul desireth, even that He doeth.

For He performeth a thing that is appointed for me and many such things are with Him. You know what kind of brought him great comfort in his time of grief? Not only that he was committed, not only was he convinced, but he was content with the fact that, hey, God's in control. God knows the end from the beginning.

God has the helicopter view, if you will. We've got what I call the train view. Man, we're just riding through life.

We're going up and around the curves and then throughout the tunnels and in and out and up and down through the rain and we can just see what's right ahead of us. I mean, just track after track after track. But God doesn't have the train view, friend.

God's got the helicopter view. He can see the end from the beginning, the beginning from the end. Somebody says, I'm so worried about next week.

Don't need to worry about next week, friend, as a child of God because God's already been there. Remember, He said, I am hath sent you. He didn't say, I was hath sent you.

He didn't say, I will be one day hath sent you. He said, I am right now. I've always been.

I am right now and I forevermore will be. And Job said, listen, He is of one mind and you're not going to change His mind. Now, that's an interesting portion of Scripture.

I mean, Job looks wild-eyed at his buddies and says, you know what, fellas? You know what I'm content with? He says, I'm content with the fact that God's a big God, God's a huge God, a supernatural God, God's a sovereign God and you are the devil or nobody else is ever going to change His mind. Nobody's going to turn Him. And he says, I'm content to believe.

I'm content to trust. And I'm confident in the fact that God is in control and everything I'm going through, although I don't understand it, although no doubt my flesh bucks and kicks against it and does not like it. He said, I'm content with the fact that God knows exactly what He's doing.

He made man 6,000 years ago and hadn't had to make a recall yet. He's never made a mistake. And sometimes we think to ourselves, Lord, I know You're sovereign and I know You're big and I know You're supernatural, but do You really know what I'm going through? Where are You, Lord? Why aren't You playing these hide-and-go-seek, count to ten, count to a hundred games with me? And Job said, Lord, I don't understand everything.

I know one thing. You're in complete control and I'm not going to change your mind about anything. And You're working and You're molding and You're making and You're doing something in my life that perhaps I do not understand.

But Job says, there's one thing about it I do understand. You are in control. Now, friend, that gives me great comfort.

Now, I'm going to be honest with you. God is not a heavenly puppeteer. That is not what the word sovereignty means.

The word sovereignty literally has the idea that He's all-powerful, that He's all-knowing, that He is all-majestic, all-holy, all-righteous, and all-supernatural. God is everything. He is all in all.

But He's not up in heaven just kind of moving us like a little chess. I remember there was a little gal that came over to my wife and I about a year ago. And she knows us real well.

She stayed with us before when we lived in Shelby when I was in Bible college. And this little girl, she came in and she said, Greg, she said, now, did you know that we're just little pieces on a big chess board and God is the great Master in heaven and He's the one that's just kind of moving all the pieces around. And I just kind of said, why don't you hear that? Just kind of like this, you know.

And she could kind of see the apprehension in my voice. She said, my mama told me that and don't you tell me it's not so because I believe what my mama said. Now, I'll be honest with you.

I don't believe life is a checkerboard. I don't believe life is a chessboard. But I do believe God's something.

And I do believe God sometimes moves us in certain directions. He puts us sometimes in tight squeezes. He puts us sometimes in what we like to refer to a predicament or a pickle.

He puts us in hard times. He presses the vices down on us so we can get content with the fact that, hey, God's never made a mistake. He knows exactly what He's doing and He's not going to lead me astray one single bit.

Proverbs 3, 5, and 6 Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not into thine own understanding and all thy ways. Acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy path. I tell you, I read the disciples sometimes and read about the disciples in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and I think to myself, Lord, how in the world did You use a bunch of those backward, illogical, redneck hillbillies ever in Your ministry? And then I wake up and look in the mirror and I say, oh, that's exactly how You did it.

Amen? But nonetheless, I'll be honest with you. You think of the disciples sometimes. I mean, Jesus came to them.

He had been preaching in Mark 4. Don't turn to everybody, but in Mark 4, all day long, He had been preaching in Capernaum. I mean, here He was preaching, the Bible says, teaching the parables of the kingdom. He was raising the sick.

He was causing the blind to see, causing the deaf to hear, causing the dumb to speak, casting out devils all day long. And nowhere does it ever say that He stopped for a piece of KFC, Kentucky Fried Chicken. It doesn't say that.

He never stopped for any lemonade, never stopped for any bread. Now, I'm sure in His humanity, He was tired and He was hungry. The Bible says that finally, close to the break of the day or the ending of the day, He got in a ship and it says specifically there were other little ships with Him.

He cast out a little bit and here's what He told His disciples. He said, get in the boat. We're going to the other side.

Now, if that is hard language to be understood, if you can't understand get in the boat, we're going to the other side. Would you please put your hand high in the air? Okay, I didn't think anybody was in here that would raise their hand. He specifically said, bold letters, get in the boat, we're going to the other side.

Did they get in the boat? Oh, yeah, we'll commend them for that. Now, He didn't say anything about what would happen when they got in the boat before they got to the other side. Did He not? He just said, get in the boat, we're going.

So they got in the boat. Jesus, in His humanity, was tired, no doubt. Been preaching, teaching, healing, doing all these things all day long.

People have been thronging Him. I believe that would tire me out. The Bible says He's in the hinder part, the back part of a ship, and He's asleep on a pillow.

And all of a sudden, boy, that thing gets to be tossed around like a toothpick in a bathtub and you talk about discouraging it. You talk about getting upset. You talk about getting to the place where they thought all hope was gone as they did in Acts chapter number 27.

These fellows thought they were, well, now I'm fixing to be dead. I mean the swells was coming up. Boom! Inside the boat, the lightning was crashing and the thunder was rolling.

It sounded like a glorified bowling alley. Everybody was getting all spooked and getting all scared. They didn't know what to do and the wind was blowing like some kind of wild coyote on the backside of a desert.

And then they got so scared they ran in there and they began to knock on the door and they banged on the door and they said, Jesus, get off the pillow. Tear us down, not that we perish. The Bible says that Jesus just stood up.

It doesn't say He said anything at this point. He just stood up, walked out there and said, Peace be still. The Bible says that the winds and the waves ceased from their raging.

Now that perplexed them a little bit. They scratched their chins, they looked at one another and they said, What manner of man is this that even the very winds and the waves obeyed His wishes? And the chapter ends there. But you know what Mark chapter 5 and verse number 1 says? And when they came to the other side, in the midst of the storm, into the country of the Gadarenes.

And I'll tell you, I know a lot of God's people who just need to get content with the fact that God's in control, quit running their mouth, bickering, trying to do all the two and two and all this, that and the other and they just need to get in the boat. He didn't say that it was going to be always easy. He didn't say it was going to always be simple and there was never going to be swells and never be storms.

We are promised hard times in the Word of God and don't you ever let some liberal preacher tell you otherwise. But they are seasons. You know spring and summer and fall and winter.

They come and they go. Winter likes to stick around a little bit up here but none the less they come and they go and seasons are here for a while and seasons leave. And God said, you will go through these seasons of trials.

You will go through these temptations. You will go through these hard times. But yet God tells us in 1 Corinthians 10, 13 that He will make a way of escape.

We've got to get to the place where we are content enough to say, God, I know You're in control. You have not most of me, not part of me, but all of me. I'm going to get off the shore.

I'm going to get in the boat. And I'm going to be content with the fact that You are in control. You know exactly what You're doing.

And Job said, He is of one mind and who can turn Him. Now look in your Bibles if you would please at verse number 15. Verse number 15, Job then says, Therefore am I troubled at His presence, when I consider I am afraid of Him.

Let me say quickly, fourthly, that Job was consecrated to the fear of God. He was committed to keep doing right. He was confident that God's Word was true and God's Word was faithful.

He was content with the fact that God was in control. But yet now we see he was consecrated to the fear of God. What Job said is not something you would hear most Baptists saying in most churches nowadays.

I mean in church, in school, wherever it is. You know what Job just said? He said, I considered His presence if you will. I mused, the psalmist used that word many, many times, mused to think about.

He says, Listen, I thought about how big God is, Job said. I thought about how majestic God is and how righteous He is upon His throne. He said, When I thought about the goodness of God, when I thought about the eternal existence and the presence of God, He said, I am afraid.

You know the Bible says in Proverbs chapter 1 verse number 7, The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. I'm going to be honest with you, America is filled with a lot of fools that don't fear God. Now when He says, I am afraid of Him, I don't think that means He's cowering down in a corner because He didn't read His devotions and God's going to blow His brains out with a lightning bolt.

That's not what He's saying. I believe when He says, I am afraid of Him, He says, Listen, I have seen, I have sensed the great majesty of God, the great power of God. I've seen what God is trying to do in my life and though I may not understand it, and though He hides Himself from me and it seems like I just can't find Him and it seems like the vice grip is getting tighter and tighter.

He says, the more I think about the bigness of God and the more I think about this huge plan, He said, it's not just some little small thing that God is doing. He's got a big, huge plan in mind. He said, the more I think about this, I get such an overwhelming fear and reverence of who God is.

And I tell you, America lacks a reverence for God. America lacks a fear for God. You know what the fear of God is? It's real simple.

The fear of God is simply this, a proper respect for the holiness of God that makes me hate doing wrong and love doing right. Let me give it to you again. I see some of you are writing.

A proper respect for the holiness of God that makes me hate doing wrong and love doing right. And Job said, I am consecrated to the fear of God. He looks at his critics who, mind you, are telling him that he's in open, vile sin.

He looks at his critics and he's sitting there and they are looking at him and for chapter, after chapter, after chapter, they have ridiculed him. They have stripped him of all of his self-righteousness and they keep on shooting the gospel gun, if you will, and they say, Job, you've got sin in your life. Job, you've got sin in your life.

Job, you've got sin in your life. And Job looks at him and says, listen, fellas, I'm committed. I'm going to keep on doing right.

I don't have any sin in my life. And he said, I'm going to tell you why I don't have any sin in my life. He says, because I've got such a reverential fear of who God is.

And I've got such a respect and such a passion for God's holiness. He said, it makes me want to hate doing wrong. It makes me want to love doing right.

And I want to remind you, Greg didn't say it about Job. God did three times. He eschewed evil.

It means to reject, to put away, to throw out, to reject, to completely annihilate. No, he was not perfect in the sense that he was sinless. But he was perfect in the sense that he was mature and wanted to sin less.

And here was a man who said, I am afraid of Him. It scares me to death to think that I would displease a holy, righteous God. And he was consecrated to God's fear.

But there's one more thing I must show you before we close. It's in verse 12. It's in verse 16.

And we also back up to verse 10. But look in verse 16. He said, For God maketh my heart soft.

Isn't that interesting? He said, listen, through all of this, God's just kind of softened me up. You know, God's got a way of humbling you. I mean, God has got a way of humbling you like nobody else can humble you.

There's been times in my ministry when God's had to bring me real low. There's been times in my life when God's had to humble me. When He has to just kind of squeeze on the old sponge of the heart, if you will, until the tear juice runs out of your eyeballs.

And I'm telling you, ladies and gentlemen, Job said, after all of this, I see that God's working on me. I see that God's squeezing on me. I've had a hard heart towards the things of God and He says He's making it soft.

But here's the real reason. Look in verse 10 if you would please. But He knoweth.

What is the but there? What's the contrast? Why did He put it there? I just want to remind you. He said, when I go to the left, He's not there. When I go to the right, He's not there.

North, south, east and west. I can't find Him with a pack of bloodhounds. God, where are You? Verse 10.

But He knoweth the way that I take. When He hath tried me, Job says, I shall come forth as gold. What do you do when you can't find God? Lastly, He was comforted by the fact that God was cleansing Him.

He was comforted in all of His trials, in all of His afflictions by realizing, hey, God's not doing this because He's some heavenly overgrown bully in heaven that wants to beat me over the head and make me submit. He said, the reason He's doing this is so He can put me in those refining fires that we heard about. So He can burn off the dross.

So He can burn away the impurities and the imperfections and the unholiness and the unrighteousness and the bitter, cantankerous attitudes. He said, the reason He has me here is so He can cleanse me. And I'm telling you, sometimes we get so mad and we throw up our hands and we say, God, where are You? Where are You when I need You most? And I'll tell you where He is.

Many times, He's stoking the fire. He's putting another log on. He's letting the flame get a little bigger and a little more intense.

A little more smoke because He knows there's some impurities that must be burned off. I'll tell you something, you won't go to Africa tonight and dig up a nice-looking diamond. You'll go to Africa tonight and you'll dig up a rock.

And you'll knock a piece here. You'll knock a piece here. You'll blow a piece here.

You'll torture a piece here. And then you'll get to the place where you have a beautiful work of art that is worth millions. But you don't make a diamond overnight.

It takes pressure. It takes softening. It takes knocking and a little bit of hardness away.

Last week before I came here, I was in an eight-day revival meeting at the Parkview Baptist Church of Ardmore, Alabama. I've been there many, many times and we're scheduled pretty much to be there every year around the same time, the week just before I come here until Jesus comes. A dear pastor friend of mine has been there for, I guess, 25 or 26 years.

It's just a small church. I suppose on Sunday morning, on a good day, they'll run about 35 people. But nonetheless, I've preached there many times and I was preaching and the pastor had me every day.

We had the Sunday through Sunday meetings and from Sunday to Sunday, we had 23 Bible preaching, gospel preaching services from Sunday to Sunday. So to say the least, I was a little bit tired. But I remember they had me on the radio every day, live, 4 o'clock, boo-boo-boo-boo, preaching every day.

They had me in the services, had three, four, five services every Sunday. I was going to different Christian schools in the area when I was there. And I mean, they were just working me and working me, but I enjoyed it.

I certainly did. God knows my heart. I love to preach.

But he came to me on Wednesday, I suppose it was, and he said, tomorrow being Thursday, he said, I want to take you to the nursing home. It's kind of a nursing care facility. It's not really a nursing home per se, but it's where a lot of crippled people are.

Well, a lot of elderly are as well who just can't take care of themselves. He said, there's a gentleman I want you to meet. I remember meeting him about two years ago.

I cannot remember his name. I apologize for that. But nonetheless, he said, I'd like to visit this guy.

He had led him to Christ in that bed. In 1989, he had a terrible, terrible tractor trailer accident. Flipped his motor in several times and now he's a quadriplegic.

He can't move from his neck down. He just lays in the bed. He's got a little tube that comes around, wraps to about right here.

And when he needs to get where the saliva has so built up in his mouth, this little tube is right there by his face and he'll just completely fill that thing up with spittle. And I don't mean to be gruesome or anything, but I mean, he lays there in that bed and that's the way he is all the time. He's got a Bible laying right beside him.

He's got a great big radio laying there and the whole stack of the Alexander Scorby Genesis 1-1 through Revelation 22-21 Bible. And he's been listening to that Bible when he's got this little TV and had it on when we walked in and had a little ball game, a little NFL game going on. He was just watching, but he can't turn his head.

He can just turn his eyes like this. And they told me that after he got saved that they put him on this big swing board and they put him in an ambulance because his desire was to be baptized. And they thought, how are you going to be baptized? And he said, well, there's a will, there's a way.

And they took him down to the Baptist church and they realized, hey, the Baptist church is not going to be big enough and so they took him across town to one of their member swimming pools. And this man was on a swing board and Brother Gary, he wanted to be so faithful to his Lord and be obedient that they took this man. They had two on this side, two on this side, one man on his head, one man on his feet and they dunked this man down in a three foot swimming pool, pulled him back up and they said when they pulled him up a couple of years ago, he said, amen, when they pulled him out of the water he can't move from his neck down.

So I went and visited. You ever been to visit somebody and go to encourage them and when you leave you feel like you've been encouraged? I mean, you go visit some elderly person that's known God all their life and I mean, they've got God all over them and you can just see it when you walk in the room. And you walk in and you think, whew, I'm going to be an encouragement to this dear old lady and you walk out and you feel about that big because she knew more about the Bible than you know in your fingernail.

And I mean, she completely just encouraged you all over. Well, I was away with this man. I remember I walked in and began to talk to him and the pastor said, won't you pray with him? And I prayed with him.

Read a couple of verses from the Bible and I'll never forget what he said. We got ready to leave and he's a very emotional man, very emotional to be around him. It's hard to be around somebody like that without big tears welling up in your eyes.

If you can keep from crying from being around somebody like that then you need your heart softened by the vice grip of God for sure. These big old tears were swelling up out of his eyes. His roommate just passed away just a couple of days before and he's in there all by himself, no nurses.

So we'd been in there about 15 minutes by this time big old tears welling up in his eyes and he had us turn the TV off and he told us when we leave that he wants to turn on one of them tapes so he could listen to the Bible on tape before he'd go to sleep. And he'd go and keep on doing that as the saliva would fill up and filter down through his throat couldn't hardly breathe and here's what he said, I'll never forget it. Big old tears welling up in his eyes and he said, Brother Greg, he said, I don't think I'll ever know why I had a truck wreck in 1989.

He leaned his head up just a little bit and that thing shook it out of his mouth. He said, but I'll be honest with you, if I could just lead one person to Jesus Christ laying in this bed, all the pain from all the years would be worth it. And I remember I walked out of that place and I thought to myself, God pity me.

When I complain and get mad and frustrated and bitter when some little trial of affliction, when the fiery trial which is to try you does come. And here's a man that has been a quadriplegic has not moved the limbs of his body since 1989. And he said, every bit of the trial, every bit of the pain, every bit of the affliction would be worthwhile.

If laying in this bed as a quadriplegic never to move again, I can lead one person to Jesus Christ. Now friend, that's a scriptural attitude in the midst of trials. What do you do when you can't find it?

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/0/SID0435.mp3>

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