

When Things Go Wrong

by Jenny Daniel

The sermon explores the reasons why things go wrong in life, emphasizing the importance of recognizing sin and seeking God's guidance and mercy.

Duration: 50:38

Scripture: Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Faithfulness In Suffering", "Trusting God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the story of a little boy named Ahidja who dies as a consequence of the wickedness in the palace of Jeroboam. Despite the sinful environment, Ahidja's heart leaned towards God. The speaker emphasizes that even in difficult circumstances, we can still choose to follow God and be a positive influence on others. The sermon also mentions the story of Job, who faced numerous trials without understanding why, but remained faithful to God. The speaker encourages listeners to rebuke Satan by staying strong in their faith, even when facing adversity.

Transcript

Well, it's a responsibility to stand in front of you, and I can't say that I enjoy it, but I'm glad for the privilege of being able to share with you that which the Lord has laid on my heart. And before I speak, I would like to thank those who have so spoiled us. If you could peep into our rooms, it looks like a little bit of a palace over there.

And Samuel said to me, Mom, it's even more wonderful than last year. I don't think so. I think each year it's wonderful, but it's such a shock to see it so beautiful that it feels even better.

But thank you for Kendra, Christine, and all the others who helped to make it such a little haven for us here on the campgrounds. Shall we pray? Thank you. Dear Father, we are here to hear thy voice.

We want to hear thee speaking to us, Lord, to teach us, to draw us to thee, to make us learn from thee. And I pray this morning, as we read thy word, as we consider thy word, that we will hear thy voice. And as we hear it, Father, that we will be willing to obey what thou didst ask of us.

In Jesus' name. Amen. All right, we can all turn to Psalm 142.

I cried unto the Lord with my voice. With my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication. I poured out my complaint before him.

I showed before him my trouble. When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knowest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.

I looked on my right hand and beheld. But there was no man that would know me. Refuge failed me.

No man cared for my soul. I cried unto thee, O Lord. I said, thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.

Attend unto my cry, for I am brought very low. Deliver me from my persecutors, for they are stronger than I. Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name. The righteous shall compass me about, for thou shalt deal bountifully with me.

Now in this psalm we read about a person that is in dire need, in sore trouble. It seems even man has failed him. And life seems to be like a prison.

But I'm so glad that the psalm ends with a ringing of triumph as he says, thou shalt deal bountifully with me. And he also claims God as his refuge. And today I felt led to talk about a very sensitive subject, but one I think that has touched every one of our lives.

And that is when things go wrong. When things go wrong. I'm sure in every one of our lives as we look back, we can think of times when things have gone wrong.

Each of us have got dreams and aspirations and hopes, especially even as a little child, one has a vision of what life should hold for one. And then when life comes, sometimes it deals so differently with us. And disillusionment comes.

And when disillusionment comes, things don't only go wrong, they go very wrong. And when I thought about this, why do things go wrong? When do things go wrong? How do we react when things go wrong? I have thought the safest place to look is the Bible. And so we're going to look at a few examples in the Bible of people where things went wrong in their lives, why they went wrong, and how they dealt with them.

So we're just going to look at the lives of a few people in the Bible. Now the first reason that I found in the Bible was things go wrong because of God's judgment upon sin. The first reason is things can go wrong because of God's judgment upon sin.

Now last year I mentioned that I have this lovely little children's book, it's called the Kings of Israel and Judah, and it speaks about the kings and it gives us many little insights into their lives, especially for children. But I have delved into that little book many a time. And it has so many lessons to teach us.

Now we're going to look at a few of the kings of Israel firstly, under this title, God's judgment upon sin. We all know about Solomon, and when Solomon was king, there was a man that was one of his servants, and that man's name was Jeroboam. Jeroboam was just an ordinary servant, but Solomon saw that he was very industrious and that he worked hard, and so he gave him the honor of becoming an overseer over his people.

So suddenly Jeroboam, from being a common servant, was raised to be an overseer. What an honor! He didn't have a father, his father died, his mother was still living, and she must have been delighted to think that her son was so honored by King Solomon. Well, one day Jeroboam had finished his work, and he was

walking out on the wall of the city, and a prophet comes towards him, and it was the prophet Ahijah.

And Ahijah had on a brand new garment, and when Ahijah approached Jeroboam, he says to Jeroboam, Jeroboam, God is going to greatly honor you. The nation of Israel is going to be divided into two. Two tribes are going to remain with David's line, but ten tribes are going to be given to you, and the prophet who demonstrated takes his new garment and divides it into ten pieces and gives ten to Jeroboam.

But he said, but Jeroboam, you must follow God, and you must cause the people to follow God. Well, what did Jeroboam do? It seems, if we read the Bible, that he was a little bit desirous of not only getting the ten tribes, but getting the twelve. And he also didn't feel like waiting for God's timing.

Because if we read in 1 Kings 11, if we read verse 26, 27, and 40, and you just highlight these words, even he lifted up his hand against the king, and then later you find these words, and this was the cause, that he lifted up his hand against the king. And then in verse 40, we find these words, Solomon sought therefore to kill him. So we find Jeroboam not happy with what God had offered him, this great honor that had given him, and he puts his hand forward to reach for the crown.

And Solomon seeks to kill him. So we find Jeroboam, trouble starts already, his life gets to be in danger because of his rebellion, and he flees to Egypt to the king Shishak. Now Shishak was a king who welcomed all rebels into his kingdom, and so Jeroboam was safe there, but we find him waiting, waiting, waiting for God to fulfill his word.

And what happens then is Solomon dies, of course you know about that, and then Jeroboam has all the people assembled in front of him. But do you know who's among the crowd? Jeroboam has come back from Egypt, he's heard that Solomon has died, and he's there amongst the crowd of people. And I feel probably that he was one of those that incited the people to ask this question of Jeroboam.

They asked Jeroboam, will you treat us better? Your father didn't treat us well. Now it says in the Bible that the Queen of Sheba says, happy are the servants of Solomon, so I don't think that was a really a true reflection. But anyway, Jeroboam then answers, he says, my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

He answers foolishly, and God uses this foolish answer of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, to divide the nation in two as he predicted, and Jeroboam goes off with his ten tribes. Now we would hope that Jeroboam would seek God, and that he would lead the people aright. God had placed great honor upon his life, but Jeroboam then decides that the people should worship golden calves at Bethel and Dan, and he leads the people astray.

He rebels against God. He sins against God, and causes other people to sin. And because he does that, trouble comes upon his life.

Things go wrong. Now it's wonderful if we turn to 1 Kings 13 verse 2, the first thing that happened to Jeroboam. You see, when things go wrong in your life because of sin, God will speak to you.

He will speak with a hard voice. He will speak with a loud voice, because he's saying to you, turn from your sin. I will have mercy upon you.

Now Jeroboam was offering at the altar with his priests, and incidentally they say he took priests of the lowest of the people, and that actually means the vilest of the people. So he had these vile priests around

the altar, and he was offering on one of these altars at Bethel or Dan. And suddenly a young prophet of Judah appears out of nowhere, and he stands in front of Jeroboam, and he, this is what he says, he cried against the altar in the word of the Lord, and said, O altar, altar, thus says the Lord, behold a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name, and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and a man's bones shall be burnt upon thee, and the men's bones.

And he gave a sign the same day, saying, this is the sign which the Lord has spoken, behold the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out. So he speaks publicly against Jeroboam, and you know Jeroboam instead of repenting and saying, oh you know God has spoken, I've done wrong, he gets so angry that he puts his hands out, and he says to them, grab that prophet. And as he puts his hands out, his arm withers and becomes stiff, and he can't move it.

So he is publicly humiliated before the people as God speaks to him, and tries to stop him in his tracks from what he is doing. Well what happens then? He prays for the prophet to please ask God to restore his arm, and God does that for him. God restores his arm for him, God has mercy upon him, but still Jeroboam continues in his sin, hardens his heart, and does not turn to God.

Well you know we've got a wonderful God. He speaks, but he doesn't stop speaking, he keeps on speaking. So God speaks to Jeroboam further.

What happens? In all his household he has one little boy that has a heart that leans towards God, and his name was Abijah. So Abijah suddenly becomes sick. In fact he gets so sick that they begin to fear for his life.

And what does Jeroboam do? He doesn't go to the priests of the altars of Bethel and Dan. He says to his wife, now I wonder, could you disguise yourself as a poor woman, and let's go to the old prophet Ahijah. Remember the prophet who told him about the ten tribes and the two tribes? Go to old prophet Ahijah and ask him what God is going to do about our son.

So the wife dresses up as a poor woman, she disguises herself, and she takes with her ten loaves of bread, a cracknell, and a bottle of honey. And that's what a poor lady took in those days. And she comes towards the prophet.

Now the prophet was blind. He was old, he couldn't see, and he would probably have been taken in by her camouflage. But God whispers to the prophet and he says, Ahijah, that woman, that poor woman that's coming in is not a poor woman at all.

This is the wife of Jeroboam the king, and I want you to tell her the judgment that I'm going to bring upon him because of his disobedience towards me. And so here comes the queen, all disguised, with a little offering of loaves and honey. And as she crosses the threshold, blind Ahijah scores out, come in, thou wife of Jeroboam.

Why does thou feignest thou to be another woman? Imagine her horror, imagine her shock. And then the prophet goes on to tell the wife that God will visit Jeroboam with such calamities because of his disobedience to God, because of the sin in his life. All his children will be slaughtered.

They won't even be buried. Their bodies are going to be in the fields and in the streets, eaten by dogs and birds. And that is just a picture of God's hatred of sin.

But then God in his justice says, this little boy, this little boy, a little Abijah, he will die the moment you cross the threshold. And when he dies, he will be buried and the nation will mourn him. And when the queen goes back, as she crosses the threshold of Tirza, the palace area, the boy dies and he's buried and he's mourned by the whole nation.

But you know what is such a bright point in this whole story is that in the palace of Jeroboam, imagine how wicked that palace was. Imagine what wrong and sin was done in the palace. There's one little boy, a tiny little boy, whose heart leant towards God.

And you know, often the young people, the children that say, you know, I can't follow God. You don't know what goes on in our home. You should listen to my mother and father.

You know, they smile at the meetings, but in the home. And that's the reason why I can't follow God. But Abijah lived in a sinful house and a palace where sin abounded, and yet his heart was turned towards God.

So we are without excuse. Each one of us are responsible to seek God, and we can't make the sins of others the excuse for our failures. Perhaps somebody sitting here is playing around with sin as Jeroboam did.

Don't do that. God does not tolerate sin and things will go wrong. Now, Jeroboam died.

It actually says in the Bible, the Lord struck him. So we don't know how he died, but he died and he had a son called Nadab and he reigned for two years. He also didn't follow God.

And so God came and dealt with him. Now, we find in this portion of scripture, they seem to always be fighting with the Philistines at Gibethon. You know, it just happens right through these kings.

And Bashar was fighting against the Philistines at Gibethon when along, I mean, Nadab, when along comes Bashar and he kills Nadab. Now remember what God said to Jeroboam, all your children will be slaughtered and thrown into the streets. And that's exactly what Bashar does.

He takes, he kills Nadab and he kills all his brothers and sisters and he lets their bodies be thrown out into the street. They weren't buried. But then Jehu, the prophet comes to Bashar and he says, because you are evil, just like Jeroboam, your children will have the same fate.

God is not mocked. Sin will have its reward. Now, Bashar lived for a lot of years and then he died.

I believe the troubles came to him when he crossed the grave. Sometimes things don't go wrong for the unsaved and we can't understand it. But one day they're going to face God and then things will be so wrong that it would have been better if they sought God in their lifetime.

But then Bashar has a son called Ella. Now Ella unfortunately had a drinking problem. I think if I was Ella and I live knowing that one day my body was going to be thrown into the streets because of the sins that my father did, it would almost induce an unsaved man to turn to drink.

And if only Bashar had repented, God would have repented of that which he would have done to the children. But we find Ella a drunkard and he had two captains and their names were Zimri and Omri. And he sends Omri to fight against the Philistines at Gibethon again.

And Zimri is at home and he decides that he's going to kill Ella. And Ella's in a room drinking with his steward, probably totally drunk. And Zimri comes in and kills him.

And again the prophecy is fulfilled because all his brothers and sisters are slaughtered to wipe out the kingly line. Well Zimri only reigned for seven days. Sin does not pay.

He was there for seven days living in the palace, beautiful palace, where he had slaughtered the other king. And Omri rushes back from Gibethon, besieges the city and the palace. And then Zimri is so petrified that he sets the whole palace alight and himself alight with it.

And then he dies. We cannot play around with sin because sin does not pay. Well Omri reigns for 12 years and the only important thing we need to know about Omri is that his son was Ahab.

And Ahab is a king I think we all know about. But there are things about Omri that really interested me. First of all, Zimri burnt the palace down.

Omri didn't have a palace. So he decides to build a palace in Samaria. Now in the north, if you look at the map of Israel, in the north there's a city called Zidon.

I don't know how you say it in America. And it was a city of commerce. So it would seem as if Omri got most of his building materials from the city of Zidon.

And in the city of Zidon there was a king and the king's name was Ethbal. Now he was called Ethbal because he was a worshipper of Baal. And probably Omri had a lot of business relationships and a more intimate relationship with the king of Ethbal because we found out that his son Ahab eventually marries the daughter of Ethbal.

Jezebel. Jezebel. Jezebel.

So and it brings great tragedy upon Israel. It doesn't pay to become too intimate with the enemies of God. Omri must have become intimate with Ethbal and his son married Jezebel.

And what tragedy came upon it. There's a warning for us. Be careful.

I remember speaking to somebody and saying don't be so intimate with the enemies of God because it could have consequences on your children. Well Ahab, God speaks to Ahab again and again. He's married to Jezebel.

She makes him build a palace, a temple to Baal. She has 400 prophets of Baal and 450 grove prophets who eat from her own table. And you just see Israel going into deep sin and depravity.

Jezebel kills the priest. Any decent priest that she can get hold of she kills. But again, in this terrible situation where death is a means, murder is a means to the end, where sin is rife, we find one man and his name is Obadiah.

And he's Ahab's steward and he follows God at the risk of his life. And he hides a hundred prophets, 15 in one cave, 15 in the other, in the midst of all this sin and depravity. So again, we are without excuse.

No matter how, what our situation is, where we are living, what we have to deal with, we can be like a little Abijah as a child, or we can be like Obadiah, serving God in an impossible situation. Now, we all know

about the prophet Elijah. And what does Elijah do? He says, I'm going to pray that God brings trouble upon Israel to turn them to God.

I'm going to pray that things go radically wrong so that they can turn to God. And so Elijah prays that it won't rain for three years. And so God answers his prayer.

He begins to speak because, you know, God doesn't just leave us in our sin. He speaks in mercy to try and draw us to him, to bring us to a place of repentance. Well, we also know about the widows of Zarephath.

She did not have a public sin. You know, when we think of Jeroboam, when we think of Ahab, when we think of the different people, their sins were blatant to the world. But Elijah, at the fear of his life, because Jezebel, of course, wanted to kill him, runs away and comes to the widow of Zarephath.

Now, Zarephath, incidentally, is very close to Zidon, where Ethbal lived and where Jezebel comes from. So it was rather a strange place that the Lord sent him to. But this widow, God mercifully provides for her.

He lets her have meal and oil, even though hers was at the last stretch. And God is good to her. But then suddenly God puts his finger on her life and her son dies.

And when her son dies, she acknowledges, it is because of sin that I've hidden in my life. You see, things went wrong for her, and she knew that it was because of hidden sin in her life. Sometimes we are blatant sinners, like the kings of Israel, but others have hidden sin.

And things go wrong because of hidden sin in our life. And we find she eventually acknowledges Elijah as a man of God, acknowledges her sin, and God has mercy upon her and restores her child to her. Well, Ahab became very angry when the drought came.

He was so angry, and one day he and Elijah face each other. And as they face each other, Ahab says, it is your fault that the drought has come to us. And Elijah turns and he said, oh no, Ahab, it is your fault, because it is your sin and causing the sin that has brought all this sorrow upon the land.

Sin was at the root of it all. Now one of the most exciting true stories in the Bible is that of Mount Carmel, where Elijah and the Baal prophets are opposed to each other. And you know, I remember as a little girl, I used to go with my dad when he used to preach in the, we call it the colored churches.

And one day as a little girl, my dad was preaching on that Mount Carmel. And I remember he could so vividly describe the prophets of Baal with their sacrifice, cutting themselves, screaming, shouting for their God to hear. And how Elijah mocked them and said, he's sleeping, wake him up, you know.

He perhaps just can't hear, you're not shouting loud enough. And then the wonder, you know, as a child, when my dad described the water that Elijah had put around the altar and the water over the sacrifice. And I thought as a child, why would Elijah want to make it so difficult for God to show his power? And when the fire came, I just remember as a little girl, I almost wanted to jump up and shout hallelujah when God did the impossible.

And so God showed himself in a mighty way on Mount Carmel and the wicked prophets were killed. But we find Ahab still does not repent. He still does not turn to God.

And of course, Jezebel is angrier than ever. You know, the Lord Jesus, when he spoke about the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man said to the Lord Jesus, can't Lazarus come from the dead and speak to my brothers and then they won't land up where I am. And then the Lord said these words, he said, even if a dead man should come up and preach to them, still they will not hear.

They hardened, they refuse to listen to the voice of God. And it is possible to be so hardened in your heart that whatever God does, when things go radically wrong, you will not hear. Don't harden your heart.

Well, Ahab goes from bad to worse, but I think we're going to leave Ahab. In Sodom and Gomorrah, we also have a picture of God's judgment upon sin, terrible sin. And you know, I was very shocked just before I came to America, in the front of our newspaper, there was a, I happened to see a big article where a leading churchman, in fact, it's such a name that you would know it if I mentioned it, said he was very disappointed in his denomination because they did not allow gay preachers to be part of the church.

I was so shocked. But you see today under a mantle of love and tolerance and open-mindedness, sin is not seen as sin. But what did God do with Sodom and Gomorrah? He sent fire and brimstone.

But you know, the wonderful thing is, if they had repented as Nineveh did, God would have had mercy upon them, and they wouldn't have had to have fire and brimstone upon them. I love this verse in 1 Corinthians 6, verse 11. Such were some of you, and among the sins that are mentioned are these very sins of sodomy.

Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of the Lord. You see, it does not matter how far we have gone down the path of sin. If we repent, God is merciful, and he can forgive, and he can cleanse, and he can help us.

So if things go wrong in our lives because of sin, God is speaking, and he's calling us to repent. Judgment has fallen upon sinful man. God's word had warned him again and again.

How can they argue with sin at the door? Seek God, repent, the old prophets implore. Judgment had fallen, but men would not heed. Sin they would cling to, determine, proceed.

While they lament what it brings in its wake, they will not turn, and its follies forsake. Judgment will fall if I trifle with sin. God is not mocked.

I can't bargain with him. Let me repent. Ere God's wrath on me fall, I will surrender.

I give up my all. Let's not be like the kings of Israel that though God spoke to them again and again, they refused to repent. Let us repent if there is sin that is the cause of things going wrong.

So the first reason is God's judgment upon sin. The second reason is apathy to God's call. In 2 Peter 2 verse 6-8 we read these words, And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an example with those that after should live ungodly, and delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked, for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds.

The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations. Now we find Lot vexing himself in the middle of Sodom. But I don't believe God ever wanted him to be in Sodom and Gomorrah.

And his stay in Sodom and Gomorrah brought terrible consequences upon himself and his family. You see, he should have let Abram choose in the first place. He had no right to choose to go there because Abram was older than him and he was accompanying Abram.

But he chose and he chose Sodom and Gomorrah. And we find that God starts speaking to Lot because what happens to him? He gets captured with the rest of the city and taken away, a captive, and then poor old Abram has to come and rescue him. But we see he remains in Sodom and Gomorrah.

He vexed his soul about the sin. He kept his hands pure. He did not get defiled.

But it didn't have the same result with his family for they did get defiled. It's a dangerous thing to be part of the world even if you can keep yourself from sinning because what if there's a brother? What if there's a sister? What if there's a child? What if there's others that are going to be contaminated while you merely vex your righteous soul and don't do anything about it? We find Lot sitting in the gate. He was accepted by the people.

I was thinking this morning, you know, Lot was in Sodom for many years and not one convert. And we find Jonah going to Nineveh and look at all the converts that turned to God. He was sitting in the gate.

He was part of them. He vexed himself but he did not move out. It was probably too much trouble.

You know, it's not easy to make a move, inverted commas, when you realize that you're in a situation where compromise is being practiced. But it's a dangerous thing to remain. Well, we find Lot had to be dragged out of Sodom.

His wife turned back because she just couldn't not look at it one more time. It was in her heart and she turns into a pillar of salt and the daughters fall into vile sin. Isn't it sad that Lot didn't take that big step and rather move out before his family were destroyed? Do not be apathetic to God's call because it is no place for you or I to be sitting in the middle of Sodom, whether we be a young person or an older person.

Don't do it. It's dangerous. The third reason that things can go wrong in our lives is to rebuke the lost, to rebuke the lost.

You know, in Romans 1 we get those words so that they are without excuse speaking about the creation of God. But I think we can use those same words when we think of Stephen and his death. Everybody that stood around Stephen as he was being stoned to death and his face shone as an angel and he spoke so well in giving his testimony, they were without excuse because God spoke to him through the things that were going wrong for him.

Things went wrong for Stephen in a human sense. I mean, he was being stoned to death. But in a heavenly sense, God took him through a turbulent Jordan to get him to heaven on the other side and to accomplish so much through the way he reacted to the things that were going wrong.

You know, we might not have stones thrown at us. We may have words thrown at us, accusations thrown at us, which can perhaps not kill us physically, but kill our reputation, kill us in so many ways that we can be killed in inverted commas. And perhaps if we are innocent, God is wanting to use us as a Stephen, that our very reaction will be so that others' conscience will be pricked.

Remember who stood there watching Stephen being stoned? Young Paul holding the clothes of the people. And later on the Damascus Road, the Lord Jesus says to Paul, is it hard for you to kick against the pricks? Well, I believe a lot of those pricks were just watching Stephen and the way he died. You know, Stephen saw above the stones and he saw the Lord Jesus waiting at the other side.

In a sense, we can see above the stones, the false accusations, the things that are being thrown at us. And we can see the Lord Jesus above it. And we can weep our tears upon his bosom and so react that the Pauls or the Paulinas or whoever it is, perhaps a brother, perhaps a sister, perhaps a parent, perhaps a daughter, perhaps a friend, can by our reaction be drawn to God.

Things may go wrong for us, but God is longing that with our reaction, we will be rebuking the lost and drawing them to him. Now, the fourth reason is to rebuke Satan. Stephen was to rebuke the lost, but the fourth reason is to rebuke Satan.

Now, Job, I feel very sorry for Job in the Bible, because it would have been so nice for Job if God had said to Job, listen here, Job, I'm going to send you, I'm going to allow Satan to do a lot of things to you, but I want you to just stand firm. And if you pass through every test, just remember, I'm there and I will honor you in the end. But God did not explain to Job.

So there Job was and things came against him. His children were killed. Everything was taken away from him.

He had sores. And the worst of all was his wife said, curse God and die. Well, when things go wrong, it's very easy to want to blame God.

And his friends came and said, it's sin in your life. Now, Job said, when he has tried me, I shall come forth as God. What a wonderful testimony.

And that is what God wants from us. If perhaps the things that are going wrong in our life is because we are a battlefield for him, between him and Satan. You know, Job, eventually when things got very wrong, he started questioning why and whatever.

And then God rebukes him a little bit in the end. And he says to him, Job, don't you realize how great I am? Have you thought of my creation? Have you thought of all the things that I made? And he mentions the different things. Trust me, trust me.

And you know, God says, so far and no further. That's what he said to the devil. He said, so far you can touch Job and no further.

And for us, God also says, so far and no further. Isn't that a wonderful comfort? Satan was waiting to gloat over his failure. Heaven was waiting, holding their breath that he would pass the test.

And praise God, he did. Job didn't hear of the challenge Satan had made to the Lord. Ignorant, fragile, defenseless, Job was when Satan's wrath poured, robbed of his wealth, of his children, stricken with boils, searing pain.

Would he curse God, end in failure? Look, he has triumphed again. Friends were not kind in their comments. Sin must be the cause of this.

Surely we speak as the guiltless. Not like this happened to me. Job said he'd pass through the furnace, gold that would purify be.

But as the heat kept on coming, Job cried in sheer agony. When at the end God had spoken, he said, don't you question me. I, who great wonders created, ask for complete trust in me.

Job was rewarded and given twice as much wealth as the past. Satan's strong boast was confounded. Job's faith had triumphed at last.

Perhaps you are part of a challenge. Satan would have you depart far from the faith of the Savior. He has laid siege to your heart.

God is expecting and waiting, watching with love, tender care. He set a limit to onslaughts. How much his child's strength can bear.

Isn't that wonderful? Will you be gold in the furnace, tried and more purely refined? Or when the fire is hottest, curse God and step out of line. God might not tell of the challenge, but he tells us of his love. And while the battle is raging, he's watching on from above.

Now the next reason we come to is reason number five. First of all, it was sin, the judgment of God upon sin. And then it was, let me just go back because I'm not going to say the wrong thing.

It was the judgment of God upon sin. And it was the apathy to God's call. It was Lot.

It was to rebuke the lost. That was Stephen. It was the battlefield and to rebuke Satan.

That was Job. And now the next reason why things can go wrong in your life is incomplete obedience to God. Incomplete obedience to God.

Now remember Jeroboam, that young prophet, that wonderful, obedient, brave young prophet of Judah who came and spoke to the altar and was so brave. Well, after he had restored the king's arm and prayed for Jeroboam that his arm be restored, Jeroboam says to him, won't you come to my house and have something to eat and rest before you return on your journey? So the young prophet answered in 1 Kings 13, he said, if thou wilt give me half thy house, I will not go in with thee. Neither will I eat bread or drink water in this place.

For the Lord said to me, eat no bread, nor drink water, nor return home by the way that thou comest. So he says to the king, I am not allowed by the express command of God to turn aside. I've got to go home another way.

But around the altar, watching the miracles that happened because the altar did split in two, the ashes did run out, and the king's arm was withered and then restored. There were young prophets, young priests, and they came home to their old father, the priest, and they told him this wonderful thing that had happened. I mean, it was such a miracle.

And about this young, brave prophet of Judah. So what does the old prophet do? He says, go and fetch him. So he fetched my ascent, settled it, and he goes out to meet the young prophet.

And he says to him, come home with me. So the prophet said, no, but I can't. God has expressly told me I may not turn aside.

So what does the old prophet say? He says, oh, but God has told me differently. I'm also a prophet. I'm an old prophet.

And God has told me you're allowed to come home with me. And you know what the young prophet did? He did do that. He turned aside and he ate.

And after he had eaten in the old prophet's house, after he had eaten, the old prophet turns to him and said, you will not arrive home alive because you have disobeyed God's word. Isn't that amazing? Isn't that cruel? And the young prophet then gets on his ass, goes back towards home, and a line attacks him, kills him. And you find the line, the ass, and the prophet's body standing together.

And people are amazed at this. I mean, the line doesn't eat the ass. He doesn't eat the prophet.

He's just dead, lying there on the floor. And so the old prophet asked for him to come back. And he says, bring the body back to me and bury me in my grave.

Because truly, he was a good prophet. And everything that he prophesied was true. And one day I want to be buried next to him, says the old prophet.

You know, there's such a dangerous lesson for us to learn from this. Because we must stick to God's word and to God's commands. And not even allow a religious person to turn us aside from the word of God.

It was an old prophet who said to him, God has told me differently. You know, I remember there was a lady, a very religious lady in our country that said, she said, you know, it's wrong for everybody else, but it's right for me. I'm the exception to the rule.

It is possible for religious people, for looked up to people, to lead us astray from the word of God. The only thing we can stick to is this Bible. And we should not deviate from the left to the right.

Think of that clergyman, ex-clergyman in South Africa that had such a terrible idea of what God wanted in our modern day. They can lead us astray. I remember now recently, somebody was telling me about a little 12 year old that had all these visions and now she was just pointing out sin left, right and center and people were repenting.

And then I said, Oh, wouldn't it be much nicer if they rather repented because of what the word of God said. It's much safer to stick to the word of God and let us not deviate from the word. Because think of what happened to that young prophet that started off so well and that ended so tragically.

It is a warning to you and I. Now the sixth reason is rather a nasty reason, but you know, things can go wrong in our lives because we are busybodies in other people's affairs. Now there was a church in Natal and there was a very old lady in the church and two other people came to visit the church and she said, somebody asked her, who are these two? Do you know them? So she said, Oh no, I don't know who they are, but they just two sticky beaks. I don't know if you use that expression in America, but a sticky beak, can you imagine the beak is sticky and it's sticking into everybody else's business and it's sticking there.

So it's quite a descriptive term in South Africa. You know, they just get to fish out what's going on in our church and to talk about it and whatever. So sometimes things go wrong in our lives and we blame God, but we are to blame.

It's our fault. We can't blame God if things go wrong and we are at fault. So am I the cause of the conflicts? Am I the cause of the pain? Am I the one that is bringing heartache and anger and blame? Am I the one that is spending more than the budget allows? Am I the one that is adding lines to dad's deep furrowed brows? Am I the child disobedient, sowing discord, sadness, strife? Am I the one that is dragging negative feelings through life? Am I the one that needs changing for things to change in the home? Let me not blame God and murmur, rather acknowledge, atone.

Lastly, I just want to say that sometimes things go wrong for which there is no reason on earth. We may search our hearts and we will not find the answers. And the only comfort we have is that one day the Lord will wipe away all tears from our eyes and he's going to explain to us why things have gone wrong.

I've sat with people and there is just no answer, but I know God has an answer. And his ways are not our ways. His thoughts are not our thoughts.

It's so much higher than ours. And isn't it going to be wonderful one day when we get to heaven to be able to understand why certain things have happened? So if we sum up our thoughts for today, the first question we need to ask ourselves is, things have gone wrong in my life. Is it perhaps as a result of the judgment of God upon sin? I might not have blatant sin like the kings of Israel and Judah, but I might have sinned like that widow who nobody knew about, but she had harbored sin in her life.

Is it God's judgment upon sin? Secondly, is it perhaps apathy to the call of God? God saying to me, get out from the situation where you're in. Beware, you're compromising. Your children will be led to compromise and it might have terrible consequences upon their lives, upon your parents' lives, your sister's, your brother's.

Don't do it. Are we being apathetic to God's call to come out from Sodom and Gomorrah, in inverted commas? Thirdly, we need to ask ourselves if perhaps, as in the case of Stephen, the sufferings we're going through, even if it's words, accusations, is perhaps God wanting to reach a Paul or a Pauline through our lives and through our reactions? Are we willing to accept the things that go wrong and to react so that others are without excuse as they watch our reactions? Fourthly, perhaps we're a Job and we're a battlefield between God and Satan, and God is waiting, heaven is waiting and saying, will they come forth as gold refined? Will they be willing to let me, let everything that I allow pass over their lives and trust me despite it? Fifthly, we need to ask ourselves, perhaps as a young prophet of Judah, we've followed God, we've made a stand for God. Others have seen it, but now we've been tempted to listen to other voices, religious voices that are saying to us, you know, you don't have to be so strict.

Let's twist the scriptures a little bit. Let's adapt it a little bit and we'll get away with it. It's not, I've got a different word and the Lord has said to me, this is okay.

Don't do it, young people. Don't do it, older people. We have to, God asks for absolute obedience.

He doesn't ask for compromise. Absolute obedience. Think of what happened to the prophet of Judah, and we don't want that to happen to us.

And sixthly, we have to ask ourselves, all the things that came upon our lives, isn't it perhaps because we have been a sticky beak, meddling in other people's affairs, or just causing trouble and havoc in the home, reacting bitter, doing things that we know are wrong. And that has brought the trouble, not only on ourselves, but on others around us. Now we could have gone to so many other people in the Bible.

There was Daniel and his reaction to what things went wrong. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, they're wonderful examples. There was Sarah, she had the wrong reaction when God didn't immediately send the Son, she made wrong plans.

Hannah was wonderful in her reaction, so opposite to Sarah. There's so much more we could have done, but I think God wanted us just to stop at these few examples this morning and ask ourselves, where do we fit in if things have gone wrong in our life? Things have gone wrong, weary pilgrim, but is it sin at your door? Judgment has heavenly fallen, seek God, his mercy implore. Things have gone wrong, but life's transient, heaven awaits further on.

Lift up your eyes, he is coming, rest your hard lot thereupon. Things have gone wrong, men are watching. Will you victorious be? Will they see God by your actions? What do their silent eyes see? Things have gone wrong, Satan's gloating, you will not stand this great trial.

But heaven looks for endurance, God's grace to traverse each mile. Things have gone wrong, are you trying to work things outside God's will? Blocking his persistent warnings, will you God's tender voice still? Things have gone wrong, seek the reason. Can I with confidence say, they are not born of my doing, my conscience clear on this day? If so, dear child, rest your burdens, full on your dear Saviour's breast.

There you will find his enabling, child, to survive every test. Amen.

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