

Winning God's Approval - Part 2

by Zac Poonen

Winning God's approval is possible through faith, which is the key to a godly life and character.

Duration: 49:25

Scripture: Job 1:21, Job 29:15, Job 31:1, Matthew 5:28, Matthew 6:24, Matthew 25:35, Galatians 3:24

Topics: "Approval"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses two types of preachers: those who focus on visions and dreams, and those who cling to traditions. He emphasizes the importance of not changing what our forefathers believed and challenges the listener to see if God will accept that challenge. The preacher then shifts to discussing the book of Job and how Job's response was not always perfect, but God still blessed him. He highlights the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, stating that in the Old Covenant, God treated people like children, but in the New Covenant, God treats us like adult sons. The preacher concludes by discussing the three-fold hedge of protection that God puts around believers and how it brings comfort in times of trouble.

Transcript

Yesterday evening, I began a series titled, Winning God's Approval. And I intend to go through and study some of the characters in the Old Testament and New Testament. There are many ways in which we can do character studies of the men whose lives are described in the Bible.

But I want to look at them with one particular aspect, predominant, and that is what it says in Hebrews 11, 39, where after giving a list of a number of these godly men in the Old Testament, it says all of them gained God's approval through faith. And that's why they are listed there. There were many men who went to heaven in Old Testament times, but some among them went there after having gained God's approval on earth.

It's one thing to be accepted by God and to get to heaven at the end of life's journey. It's quite another thing to get there after having gained God's approval or won his approval for the way we lived on earth. God hasn't saved us merely to take us to heaven when we die.

He's got a purpose. When he made Adam, he had a purpose. And Adam frustrated that purpose.

But he has a purpose for us now. And we can either fulfill it or frustrate it. So when we look at some of the examples in the Old Testament and New Testament, we can see examples of men who won God's approval or who lost it, didn't get it.

And the important factor that was essential to win God's approval, as we see here in this verse, was faith. Now, faith is a word that's found often in the New Testament, not so much in the Old Testament. But yet this chapter teaches us that even those Old Testament men, all the way up from Abel, lived by faith.

And that's the way they won God's approval. And faith is, as I said yesterday, the leaning of the human personality upon God, in perfect confidence, in total confidence, in his perfect wisdom, perfect love, and absolute power. And we considered Adam and Eve yesterday, how they were tested and failed.

Paul writing to Timothy, here's another verse I want to quote in 2 Timothy 2, the last letter that Paul wrote to one of his finest co-workers, says to him at the end of his life, Timothy, 2 Timothy 2.15, make sure you win God's approval. Those were almost his closing words. After spending a lifetime in God's service, Paul tells Timothy, be diligent, 2 Timothy 2.15, work hard.

Be diligent means work hard, like people in the world work hard to make a million dollars, or to make money, to build a house, or whatever. He says, work hard to win God's approval. That's the thing that's going to count in eternity.

We can get into eternity with tremendous joy, or with regret, over the way we lived on earth, even if we get to heaven. God wants us to enter heaven. The Bible speaks about, in 2 Peter 1, about having an abundant entrance into heaven.

Entering heaven with exceeding joy. And that is God's will for every one of us. But it's not dependent entirely on God.

You know, if our sanctification were dependent entirely on God, we'd all be like Jesus today. But you and I know we're not. What is it that makes the difference between believers? What is it that makes the difference between two people who are born again the same day, attend the same church, and 10 years later, when you see them, they have the same opportunities, listen to the same messages.

Why is there a tremendous difference? It's because during those 10 years, these two people made decisions of different types. One indulged himself, perhaps. One denied himself, and did God's will.

That's what makes the difference. In different situations that we face, we take decisions. Sometimes we're taking decisions without even realizing it.

Every day, there are numerous decisions we take. In a difficult situation, we decide whether to tell a lie, or tell the truth and suffer the consequences. Or tell a lie and escape consequences temporarily.

In some other situation, we decide how we're going to spend our spare time. What we're going to read, what we're going to look at, how we're going to spend our money, how we're going to spend our time. We're taking decisions all the time.

Your decisions determine what you're going to be 10 years from now. It's important. God put Adam and Eve in the garden and let them take a decision.

He wouldn't force them. They could decide either to obey God and worship him, the Creator, or satisfy their lusts and worship what he had created, some beautiful fruit. Today, we face the same temptation, the Creator or the created.

We want to look at the life of Job today, the way Job was tested. Jeremiah once said, in Jeremiah chapter 12, verse 3, Lord, you examine my heart's attitude towards you. Lord, you examine my heart's attitude towards you.

Now, Jeremiah was perhaps the most godly man on earth at that time. He was God's prophet. God had chosen him before he was born, in his mother's womb, to be a prophet.

And he grew up to be a very faithful prophet. But yet, God constantly examined his heart's attitude towards him. And that's how he continued to be a prophet.

It's not a once-for-all thing that God tests us once and says, okay, you've passed. Testing is something continuous that goes on all through life. Why does God test us? For the same reason that our children are tested in school.

We don't hold our children back on examination day. Why? Because we know a test means a promotion. It's the way, it's the reason why we sit for tests or go for an interview for a job.

It's a test. And we know that test means an opportunity to get a job, a good job, with a good salary. So we look forward to tests on earth.

It's exactly the same reason with which God tests us, in different circumstances in life. The intention is promotion, a higher position, greater usefulness in God's kingdom. He never uses anyone whom he doesn't test.

And many, many people are not, God cannot use them because they have not realized or recognized the seriousness of those tests. Sometimes we don't realize till the test is over that we were being tested. Job.

Job was a man, I've admired him for one thing, that God could boast about him to Satan. And through the years, whenever I've read this verse, it's always challenged me. When in the book of Job, God said, the Lord said to Satan, chapter 1, verse 8. There are very few instances in the Bible where you read about God speaking to Satan.

Very few. And here is one of those instances with the pride of a father a good type of pride in a son who has lived commendably. God says to Satan, Satan's been wandering all around the world.

You know, he asks Satan first, where have you been coming from, verse 7. He says, I've been roaming around the earth and looking at people. Did you know that? Satan's always moving around, looking at people, especially those who claim to be God's children. And his opinion about you may be quite different from what other people think about you, because he knows a lot more about your life than other people do.

And the Lord said to Satan, okay, in all your wanderings around the world, you've been examining different people. Have you come across my servant, Job? And Satan certainly had. And have you seen a man like that on the face of the earth? A man, blameless, upright, fearing God, turning away from evil.

It doesn't mean that Joe was exactly like Jesus. No. What God meant was blameless means according to the light he had, he was blameless.

If a child gets 100% in mathematics in the first grade, A plus or whatever is the highest grade you have here in the United States, if that's what he got in first grade, you can't get more than that. But it doesn't mean he's perfect in mathematics. He's got a long way to go in math, but at his level, he couldn't get any more than that.

That's the meaning of blameless. And that's a great encouragement to us, that you know, God does not evaluate you according to his perfect standard. None of us would match up.

It says all have come, sinned and come short of the glory of God. But he expects us, once we become his children, to live at the level of your conscience, which will develop, just like a child going from first grade to second grade to third grade, all the way up to Ph.D. God's got a great education for us, but at each stage, we can be blameless. He does not evaluate you according to the conscience of somebody else.

See, that's a great encouragement, should be, to all of us. We, human beings, we're so evil. We evaluate people according to our conscience.

I hope you see the distinction there. God evaluates you according to your conscience, whereas man evaluates you according to his own conscience. In other words, it would be as foolish as a tenth-grade student asking a first-grade student, why don't you understand trigonometry or calculus? It's stupid.

He's not supposed to. He's in the first grade. Do you know that there are some things, I mean, this may astound you, but when I understood it, it liberated me.

Do you know that there are some things that may be sin for you, but which are not sin for another person yet? Because he hasn't got light on it yet. And Almighty God judges that person according to the light he has, not according to the light you have. When he gives a question paper to a student, he sees what grade that student is in, and he doesn't give him an examination paper that's above that student's level.

It's very important to understand this. And God is so merciful in his judgment. He's so eager to appreciate wherever he can find room for appreciation, which is another thing we don't do.

We're so miserly when it comes to appreciating people, and very rich when it comes to criticizing them, unfortunately. And that's one of the areas where we are more like the devil than like Christ. Jesus was a great master at appreciating people.

That's a good habit that we can all learn from him. Well, you see one example here. You know, I personally believe Job was the first book written in the Bible, because Genesis was written by Moses.

And Job lived somewhere between Noah and Abraham. It's the only book in the Bible who has no mention or no connection with Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. All the other books have got some connection with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, except Job.

So Job was the first book of the Bible. The first book that God wrote was about a man whom he appreciated. The first book of the Bible that God wrote was about a man whom God appreciated, but whom Satan attacked left, right, and center, but whom God brought through triumphantly.

When God wanted to write a book for man, he wrote about a man of God who was falsely accused and suffered a lot, but who came through triumphantly. That's a great encouragement to me. So in the first book of the Bible, I see God expressing his appreciation of an imperfect man.

As you read through the book of Job, you can see that man's imperfect in so many areas. I mean, even we wouldn't say some of the things that Job said, but God still looked at him and said, well, at his level right now, he's perfect, and upright, and blameless before me. I'm greatly encouraged when I read that, to see that if I live according to the light of my conscience, not yours, mine, God is delighted with me.

It's very important for us to recognize this. God wants us to know that if you are seeking to live a godly life, even if you didn't succeed perfectly, you're seeking to please him. He is delighted.

It's important for us to know that. That encourages us in our battle against Satan. And don't allow yourself to be condemned by the accusations of Satan, or by the opinions of other people, even by the opinions of your husband or your wife.

It's not as important as God's. It's such an encouragement to know that God says to Satan, here is a man, he's not perfect according to my standard of perfection, but according to his level of the understanding he has, he's blameless, a man who fears God, and turns away from evil. Now, Job may have been a very intelligent man, a very educated man, but God doesn't care for that.

He doesn't mention that. He doesn't say to the devil, do you see that fellow, how educated he is? Do you see how much he's accomplished? Job was a wealthy man, a very wealthy man, but God doesn't care for that. He doesn't mention that to the devil.

It's important to understand what God values. It says here that Job had, verse 3, 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 female donkeys, and very many servants, that he was the greatest, means one of the richest men of all the East. Can a rich man be a spiritual man? Some people say no.

Here was a man who was. But a rich man may be a carnal man too. There's no connection between wealth and spirituality.

You can have wealth or not have it. Spirituality is quite independent. It's like your sight and your hearing.

You can have good sight and bad hearing, or good hearing and bad sight. You can be a wealthy man and a spiritual man, or a wealthy man and a carnal man. You can be a poor man and a spiritual man, and a poor man and a carnal man.

There's no connection between these two. It's important to understand that, because some people think that if you're really spiritual, you'll be poor, and there are others at the other extreme who got pendulomitis, who say if you're spiritual, you'll be wealthy. Both are equally wrong.

Paul was a spiritual man, and he was extremely poor. He was at the other end of the wealth spectrum from Job. But he was a spiritual man.

It's important for us to understand that, that when God looks at a man, he looks at his character, not at his intelligence, not at his education, not at his property, not at his wealth, none of these things. Here's a man who fears God and turns away from evil. If God can say that about you and me, how much we have in our bank account doesn't make one difference at all.

God will take care of us. So that's one of the first things we see here. And of course, Satan was there immediately to counter God's statement, and to say, well Job, there's a reason, God, why Job fears you.

Does Job fear you for nothing, verse 9? You blessed him in so many ways. You prospered him. Well, no wonder he will serve you.

And that's an accusation that the devil seeks to bring against God's children even today. You know why those folks are serving you? Because you blessed them. Health, wealth, provided their needs, no wonder they'll serve you.

And God says, no, you can test him. Here's where testing comes. The purpose of testing, so that, one of the purposes, is so that God can demonstrate to the devil that he's got people on earth who will serve him, even if they don't have earthly blessings, not only when they do have it.

Satan says, take away these things, and then let's see whether he's going to be such a wholehearted disciple of yours or not. Can God accept that, he, God accepted that challenge when it came to Job. The question is, can he accept that challenge, if Satan challenges Job, God concerning you? If Satan were to say to God concerning you, well, that fellow, I know he goes to church regularly and serves you and gives money for your work and does a lot of things, but that's because you've blessed him in so many ways.

Take away those things. Then let's see whether he serves you or not. I'd like to see that.

I hope God can accept that challenge. That's one of the first messages that comes from the book of Job, the first book God wrote in the Bible. And when we look at the way Job responded, it wasn't always perfect.

And yet, at the end, you find God blessed him. We must remember one thing when we read the book of Job, and that is, in fact, not only the book of Job, the entire Old Testament. And that is that they were living under the Old Covenant.

You don't expect as much from a three-year-old as from a 25-year-old, something like that. The book of Galatians chapter 3 and chapter 4 says one simple thing about the difference between Old Covenant and New Covenant is this, that in the Old Covenant, God treated people like babies, like little children. But in the New Covenant, God treats us like adult sons.

And so don't compare yourself with Job. Remember, he knew nothing about Calvary. He knew nothing about Jesus Christ.

He had no Bible. He did not have the Holy Spirit. He did not have fellowship.

He did not have Sunday sermons. He did not have Christian books or CDs, nothing. How can you compare yourself with him? It's amazing what he accomplished without all these things.

So don't find comfort for your complaints from by saying that Job also complained. We have a lot more. And to whom more is given, more is required.

We should never forget that. So whenever you read about the failures of these Old Testament people, don't ever find a comfort in them. You know, I've heard Christian preachers who commit adultery and say, well, David also committed adultery.

He was a man after God's own heart. When they break something in the house, they say, well, in anger, well, Moses also broke the tablets of stone when he came down from the mountain. I'm not better than Moses.

Do you know what Jesus said? He said the greatest man in the Old Testament was John the Baptist, Matthew chapter 11. But the least person in God's kingdom can rise higher than him. Have you heard that? Don't ever find a comfort for your sin in the failures of Old Testament saints.

It's amazing how people go to this book, which is supposed to make us holy, to find comfort for sin. It's amazing. This book was not meant to give you comfort in your sin, but to teach you how you can overcome.

So you must keep that in mind, lest we find comfort in Job's failures. We need not fail like Job, because the author and finisher of our faith is not Job, it's Jesus Christ. And he never complained when he faced trial.

That's the message of victory that the New Covenant brings. Otherwise, we can go to books like this and say, well, well, I'm saying that when you, if you do complain like Job, remember you haven't come into the New Covenant life. That's all I say.

God will still understand you, but the challenge is always to rise higher. Now let's look at the ways in which Satan tempted this man. The first step was to take away his property.

God said, okay, test him. I want to prove to you that God loves, that Job loves me, God said, more than his property. That's the first test.

Do you love God more than all the blessings he has given you? Do you want the blesser or the blessings, the giver or the gifts? And it's quite amazing, I've never heard in my life of any man who lost his entire family and all his business and property in one single day. Now, I don't believe this is a parable. I believe this is a true story.

It's amazing what he went through. The New Testament refers to Job in the book of James chapter five is a true story. He was a man who lost everything and when he lost it, look at his words.

This is the triumph of faith that we see in Job verse 21, chapter one, verse 21. When he heard one after the other servants coming and telling him that all his property had been destroyed and his ten sons, his ten children, seven sons and three daughters, had all died. What is his response? He says in Job 121, when I came from my mother's womb, I had no property, no sheep, no camels, no donkeys and nothing, no children, not even a stitch of clothing, naked.

One day when I die and go into the grave, I'm not going to take my camels and sheep and donkeys with me or my business or my children or my money or my bank account. I came naked, I'm going to go naked. And in between that period, between birth and the grave, God allows me to have some things, children, family, property, wealth.

And he who gave me these things has every right to take them away. They're his, not mine. Blessed is the man who recognizes that everything he has is a temporary loan from God.

You know what Paul says in 1 Timothy 6? We brought nothing into the world, and we shall take nothing away. It's exactly similar words. Therefore, don't pursue after money, you man of God.

We brought nothing into the world, and therefore, it is certain that we can take nothing out. It's, I mean, if I were to use an illustration, it's like if you took your little three-year-old to visit someone else's house, and while he was in that house, those folks were kind enough to let him play with all the little cars and toys that they have in the house. And as you leave the house and you check the pockets of your little three-year-old, you find some things in it.

He doesn't have light on. He thinks, well, I can take these things home. And you empty his pockets and say, son, when we came to this house, we brought nothing.

And so when we leave, we got to leave with nothing. So that's why you don't find anything in the pockets of people when they're buried. Because when they came, they came with nothing.

And it's as if they're leaving the house, and God says, son, daughter, when you came into the world, you came with nothing. You got to leave with nothing. Then what about all these things we acquired, or we think we acquired during our life on earth? The Lord says, that was only a loan.

What about my children? That was a loan, too. I gave them to you for the short period you were on earth to see what you would do with them. Would you think this was yours? Would you live only for this? Or would you use them for me? Your money, your house, your life, your family, your children, would you bring them up to live for me? That's the test.

Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord took away. Job 121, blessed be the name of the Lord.

He recognized by faith, all that I've acquired is God's gift. Paul says somewhat similar words in 1 Corinthians chapter 4. He says in verse 7, what have you got which you did not receive? Can you stop for a moment right now, and while you're seated, think of one single thing you have which you did not receive. Your intelligence, your good looks, your wealth, your children.

Think of many, many other people in the world who don't have these things. It's not because you were smarter. It's because God was good to you.

Never forget that, brothers and sisters. Faith, it's a test of faith. If you want to gain God's approval through faith, learn something from Job.

Lord, I recognize they're all yours. The second step which Satan took was to bring sickness into his life. Chapter 2. He failed in the first one.

Job gained God's approval through faith. The second test was, Satan said, yeah, well, I know, you know, human beings, all that they may say, they say they love their family and all that, but ultimately they don't. They love themselves.

And so, okay, Job passed the test, but touch his body. Then let's see whether he serves you. Give him a little sickness.

Give him a little pain in his body. Oh, he'll stop serving you immediately. God says, go ahead.

You know, there's a statement of Satan's here. I mean, normally Satan's statements discourage us and depress us, but here's a statement of Satan that has encouraged me immensely for many, many years. And I want to share that with you.

Satan said to God, verse 10 of chapter 1, God, you have put a threefold hedge around Job. Now, I wouldn't have known that if Satan hadn't accidentally leaked that information to God. But around me, there's a threefold hedge.

You know what that is? First, you put a hedge around him, that's the innermost circle around me. And then you put a hedge around his family, that's my wife and children. And then you put a hedge around my business and property and possessions.

Did you know that? Do you know that that statement is not found anywhere else in the Bible? We've got to thank Satan for that revelation. And I tell you, it's helped me immensely. God, if you're a child of God, now it doesn't apply to everyone, but if you're a child of God, you've given your life to Christ, and you've chosen to be a child of Almighty God, this is true of you.

Immediately something happens as soon as you surrender your life to Christ. There's a threefold hedge around you. One around you personally, which includes your body and what you are, your personality, your mind.

And the other is around your children. Do you know that your children are protected if you're a godly man? Even if one parent is godly, 1 Corinthians 7 says there's a protection around the children. And third, God is interested in your bank account, your possessions, he protects it.

Thank God for such a such a truth, a glorious truth. And I believe we will need that in the days to come, when things are going to get worse, as Jesus predicted, in this world. When men's hearts will fail them for fear, when they see the roaring of the tsunami waves, you read that Luke 21, and when they see wars and terrorism and risk to life everywhere, I tell you, I'm thankful that I know there's a threefold hedge around me.

It's one of the most glorious truths in the Bible, revealed by Satan, that comforted me. And it'll comfort you. It's true.

Because when Satan tells, talks to us, he tells lies. But when he talks to God, he's not telling a lie. He was saying that to God, you put a threefold hedge around.

And the interesting thing we see here is that Satan could not come through any of those hedges until God said, okay, I'll open it up a little bit for you. That's the test. Okay, here's, I'll open up, let's see, Satan, I'll open up hedge number three and hedge number two.

That means you can go and take his possessions and hedge number two, touch his family. But you're not, hedge number one is closed. You can't touch his body.

And then in chapter two, Satan comes to God and says, well, let me go through hedge number one, then let's see. See, and when he went through hedge number one, God says, well, only as far as his body, you can't kill him. That's wonderful.

Do you know that Satan can't kill you without God's permission? No cancer can kill you without God's permission. I'll tell you that. No sickness, nothing can come to you without God's permission.

That's written in the first book of the Bible, two truths. One is sickness comes from Satan. No sickness comes from God.

I'll tell you why, because if you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly father give good gifts to those who ask him? I've never wanted to give a single sickness to any of my children. God is a million times better. But so sickness does come from the devil.

All sickness comes from the devil, but God permits it sometimes. And that's written in the first book of the Bible. To sanctify Job, he permitted it in Paul's life to sanctify him.

And Paul prayed three times that that thorn in the flesh would go. And God said, no, that's good for you because it'll keep you humble. Paul, you're having such a fantastic ministry that you're in danger of your head getting puffed up, but this sickness will keep you humble.

Timothy had such a fantastic ministry and he had a stomach problem. We read in 1 Timothy 5, but he never got over. Paul laid his hands on him numerous times and nothing happened.

He lived with that stomach's infirmity. God permits sickness, but he never gives it. Remember that sickness is always from the devil.

And when God permits it in his children, it's always with a purpose. Why did God permit all these things to happen to Job? Was it with a purpose? You know, he was such an upright man. If you get time, read Job chapters 29, 30, and 31.

Three chapters. You'll be amazed at the righteousness of this man. Here was a man who way back in Old Testament times, before the law was given, you know what he said? I will never lust with my eyes after a woman.

That's thousands of years before Jesus said that in Matthew chapter 5. Where did Job get it from? He had no Bible. He got it from his conscience, enlightened by the Holy Spirit. He says there in those chapters, I have never made gold my God.

Where did he get that light from? That gold can become your God? From the Holy Spirit. He said if I saw a blind man walking down the road, I'd help him across the street. Where did he get that light from? To help the weak and the poor.

He says I've made the widow's heart sing for joy because I helped her. I never left an orphan helpless that I meant. It's an amazing story, this man's life.

Chapters 29 to 31. And you say boy, amazing how this man could live like this. Such an upright life with no Bible, no fellowship, no preachers, no Bibles, no CDs, nothing but the Holy Spirit teaching his conscience.

It's amazing how far we can progress. You just read those three chapters. But, he had one big defect which spoiled everything.

And that was, he was proud of his righteousness. It's something like making a wonderful dish and then putting one dead lizard inside it. And you offer it to people and they say well, I'm not exactly hungry today.

Thank you. You know, that's what righteousness is with pride. You know, the Pharisees for example, this was their problem.

We need to understand this. You can come out of deep pits like adultery, bitterness, jealousy. These are all deep pits.

Let's say adultery is a hundred foot pit. And you've come out of that. And then you fall into a thousand foot pit called spiritual pride.

What type of victory is that? The most difficult thing for God to do, listen to this, is not the creation of the world. He could do that with the snap of a finger. Creating the world, the universe, let it be.

It was done. The most difficult thing for God to do, I've discovered, is to make a man spiritual and keep him humble at the end of it. Very, very difficult.

To make a man holy and keep him humble so that he'll never take the credit for it and never despise another who is not holy. Very difficult for God to do that. This was the problem with the Pharisees.

That's why they never made it to God's kingdom. And that was Job's problem. He was so proud of his righteousness.

And you see that in those three chapters I just mentioned. And God had to deliver him from this terrible evil. And that's why he took him through all these trials.

To save him from pride in his own righteousness. To make him recognize that it's not only his children and his property that God gave him, even his righteousness was from God. He didn't recognize that.

He knew his children God gave him, the Lord gave. He knew his property the Lord gave. But when it came to his righteousness, he thought, that's my own.

It isn't. And he had to go through all those painful lessons to learn that. And many a time God takes us through trials to humble us.

To make us recognize that everything, including the little goodness we think we have, is from him. So he allowed Satan to test him with sickness. And Job passed the test.

He says in verse 10, the last part, shall we accept good things from God and not adversity? He passed the test. Then a third step that Satan used was to afflict Job through his wife. And that's a method Satan uses often since then too.

Through husband or wife. Through your marriage partner. Through your spouse.

You know, in the beginning I thought when God opened up Hedge 3 and Job and Satan destroyed all of Job's property. And then God said, okay, Hedge 2 is also opened up and inside Hedge 2 are Job's wife and 10 children. Why did Satan kill only the 10 children? Because he said, that wife is useful for me.

She's Satan's wife. I mean, if he killed off the wife, who'd nag Job? It could be a husband too, by the way. Does God keep you alive just because, does Satan keep you alive just because he wants to accomplish a purpose through you? I hope not.

There's something we can learn there. Satan used his ways to nag and nag and nag this man of God. This man whom God himself said is the most perfect man on earth.

His wife didn't think so. It's terrible. That's not the last case in history like that.

There are many, many others like that. John Wesley had such a terrible wife. She was almost like a witch.

Harassing him and troubling him wherever he went. And it just made John Wesley manifest that the sanctification he preached was true in his life. He never spoke one unkind word about her.

So, Satan has used, and there are other cases too where, you know, you read stories of women like Madame Guillaume, who had a very difficult husband, through whom she was sanctified. It works both ways. God sometimes allows godly men, godly women, to have difficult spouses who don't understand.

And those are means whom God uses. Yesterday we saw about Satan using Eve to tempt Adam. And here he uses Job's wife to tempt Job, but Job would not yield.

He was not going to yield his wife. Can you imagine that his wife suggested to Job that he commit suicide? He says, why don't you just commit suicide, verse 9. Job says, you're talking like a foolish woman. And the fourth step was when Satan tempted Job by irritating him through four preachers.

Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, and to a little much lesser extent, Elihu. These were four different types of preachers. The first was one who talked about visions.

I find there are four types of preachers in the world. One who always talk about visions and dreams, and most of them imaginary. And secondly, you read that in chapter 4, and then in chapter 8 you read about another type of preacher who always talks about traditions.

Ah, we shouldn't change what our forefathers believed. Well, your forefathers may have been wrong. And the third type of preacher is the one who is critical.

You read in Job 11, he calls Job, verse 12, an idiot, and things like that, you know. That's another type of preacher, harsh, cruel. And the fourth type of preacher is Elihu, chapter 32, apparently very kind, young man, but with no experience of suffering.

You know, it's very easy to go and preach to somebody who's suffering without having had any experience yourself. We find all these four types of preachers in the world, and preachers can come to us with their apparently prophetic utterances as to why we are having some sickness, or why we are having some problems when we are going, and they don't comfort us. And none of these people comforted.

Job said, you're all miserable comforters. You didn't come here to comfort me. And those were Satan's agents too.

Can a preacher be Satan's agent? Sure. Why not? If he's not in touch with God, if he imagines himself to be some prophet, self-appointed prophet who thinks he's in touch with God and knows all the solution to your problems, be careful about such people. Far better to follow a preacher who shows you what's in God's word.

Faith comes by hearing what is written in the word of God. So, Satan used all these methods, but Job finally came through. You know why? Because God finally spoke to him and manifested his power and his

might.

And Job says these words, let me read it to you in closing. In Job 42 verse 5, he says, O God, till now I heard of you from these preachers who said so many things, but I didn't bring me to repentance, but now I see you. Mine eyes have been opened, I've seen your glory, and I repent.

And I take back, I retract, Job 42 16, I take back all the stupid things I said. Here's the wonderful message of the book of Job at the end. Immediately, God blotted out from his record all those rebellious statements that you find in the book of Job.

You may see them in the book of Job, questions like, God, why have you made me your target? And why are you so much against me? But when you get up to heaven, you'll find it's not there. Blotted out by the blood of Christ, because he repented and took it back. What a wonderful message there is here.

We can have lived a lifetime in sin, and like the thief on the cross, in one moment, we can say, Lord, I'm sorry. I repent. I take back everything I said.

And in a moment, it's all gone. Praise God for such a wonderful gospel.

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