

***What Do We Expect From God?***  
**Job 2**  
**Sermon by Rev. Keith Davis on Nov. 26, 2006**

Beloved brothers and sisters in of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the movie *Forest Gump*, the main character Forest sits on a park bench; he's holding a box of chocolates on his lap, and he tells the women sitting next to him, *My momma always said, 'Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get'.*

While we Christians certainly possess a much deeper, and much richer understanding than that (we have the advantage of the doctrine of God's providence), there is truth in that clever little saying. From day to day, we never what we're gonna get.

Thanksgiving morning we considered the tragic events that rocked the life of Job. One moment he was the richest man in the east, a father of ten children, master of many servants, owner of thousands of sheep, cattle, and camels. But within then span of few brief moments, he lost everything.

Four messengers arrived, one right on the heels of the other, bringing the bad news. His oxen have been stolen, his livestock killed, his camels had been taken, and the last report was worst of all--every last one of his children had perished.

In my conversations with some of you following that service, we talked about the frightening aspects of that passage, how tragedy could strike any one of us, at any time. We just don't know what joy or what sorrow, what triumphs or what tribulations will accompany our life from day to day. We could wake up tomorrow, and be called to endure similar hardships like Job.

Granted, that's not an option we like to consider; that's not something we like to dwell on. We like to expect good things from God. We'd like to think that everyday of our life we're going to be pleasantly surprised by another sweet tasting piece of chocolate.

But beloved, if we look at our lives the way God's Word instructs us, the way God's servant Job instructs us in our text, then we will come to understand that at some point in our lives, even at

*many* points along the way, we ought to expect periods of trouble and hardship, we ought to expect periods of pain and suffering, periods of trials and tribulations.

Trials play a very important part in the life of the child of God. I've entitled this morning's message *What we do expect from God?* just so you and I can ask ourselves that very question this morning; just so you and I can look to God's Word and find our answer.

In our text today we consider how *God, in His sovereign power, allows His servant Job to undergo a second intense trial.*

- 1) Job's New Challenge (1-5);
- 2) Job's Agonizing Trial & Temptation (6-9);
- 3) Job's Godly Response (10).

1) Job's New Challenge (1-6);

Congregation, you probably noticed that Job 2 starts in very similar fashion to Job 1. *On another day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord and Satan also came with them to present himself before the Lord.*

It's safe to assume that not a whole lot of time has passed since Job's first trial. In fact, we could be talking about a matter of a few days, at the very most. So just about the time when Job was thinking that things couldn't get any worse, they did—and in a big way!

Maybe you know what this is like. Or maybe you know someone who has gone through a series of trials, how they were sent reeling as they met with one hardship after the next. I heard a minister tell the story of a colleague of his who went through a time like this.

He explained how this man's house was hit by two hurricanes back to back; the second hurricane totally destroyed his home. In the mist of that trial, he received word that his father had just passed away. And while he was tending to the affairs of his family, he received the news that his presbytery had just taken a vote to remove him as pastor from the church he was serving.

That's the way things happen sometimes. We're struck by wave after wave of intense trials; we're caught up in a tsunami (title wave) of afflictions. The moment we think we hit bottom, the moment we think things couldn't get any worse—boom—just like that the phone rings; something else has happened, and we are sent reeling once more.

That's the reality Job is facing. Now, as far as these angels presenting themselves to God, we said last Thursday that the angels did this because they are messengers of God sent to do God's bidding. The angels report back to their Master to give an accounting of their activities.

That's not unusual. What *is* unusual is that Satan himself appears before God. This is unusual because Satan is no longer one of God's servants; he is an enemy of God and he actively seeks to thwart God's plans, not bring them to fruition. He's there because he wants something.

What is of interest here (what I didn't mention specifically on Thursday) is that this scene makes it very clear that Satan himself (as rebellious and evil as he is) is *also* accountable to God for his whereabouts and his activities. This demonstrates that God's is sovereign over Satan.

In verse two, the Lord asks Satan the same question as before: *where have you come from*. And Satan provides the same evasive answer. *From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it*. As we said Thursday, Satan is like a mischievous teenager; he's not about to tell the Lord what he has been up to; there's nothing innocent about his answer—he's a prowling lion!

You'll notice that in Satan's response, he makes no mention of Job. It's like Satan ignores Job altogether. Although Satan worked on Job with all his might, he could not cause Job to sin by charging God with wrong doing in his former trial.

God however does mention Job. Just like the first time, God places Job *front and center* before Satan. God repeats the virtues of Job from back in chapter 1: 8. *Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him, he is a blameless and upright man, a man who fears God and shuns evil*. We said last time how this was God's way of boasting about Job; how God took great pleasure in boasting of the righteousness and integrity of His servant Job.

But then notice what God does. He not only repeats Job's virtues, but He intensifies His gloating and boasting about Job. He tells Satan that *Job persevered*, he was victorious; *he still maintains his integrity (his faith) though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason.*

Despite all of Satan's efforts, despite all the malice that Satan incited God to bring against Job, his faith in God remained strong. We're struck by that fact; Satan accused Job of serving God only for the good he could get out of it; but Satan was wrong. He didn't account for faith.

You know, missionaries witness this all the time. They set up missions in poverty stricken lands; the response is usually very favorable at first. That's mainly because the people know that western missionaries are very well supported; they will have a vast supply of food and clothing and other luxuries the likes of which very few of them have seen or enjoyed.

And for a time, many villagers will worship at the church and come to the Bible studies and act like genuine converts. But when they meet up with opposition or persecution from fellow tribesmen or from Islamic factions on account of their faith, they quickly fall away.

They'd rather renounce their faith than lose their lives. Not surprisingly, that's the new approach that Satan takes as he responds to God's challenge. God says my servant Job maintains his integrity despite losing everything.

Satan says *Skin for skin*. That's a proverb, a phrase whose meaning remains something of a mystery; from the context it seems to suggest that Satan is telling God that the first test was not completely fair. That was not a *real* test. Yes, God agreed to take away Job's possessions and his children; but God didn't permit Satan to harm Job himself. So Satan says, "skin for skin".

It is now Satan's contention that a man will surely give up his integrity if his life, his *well-being* is at stake. So Satan makes a new proposal, saying *Stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face*. We commented on Job 1 that even though the text says that God "placed Job into Satan's hands", and even though this seems to suggest that

Satan was in control of these horrific events, we know that God is in sovereign and complete control of the trials and tragedies of Job's life.

These hardships were the result of the malice (hatred) of Satan, but this all came about as a result of God's good and sovereign will. The language Satan uses in verse 5 brings this to light. Satan realizes that God is sovereign in these matters. Satan has no power to bring harm or hardship into the lives of God's people.

Satan can do nothing but what God allows him to do. And as John Calvin points out, the permission which God gave to Satan is not a *bare permissiveness* where Satan could do what he wanted, where he was in control. No. God is always and ever in control of all that Satan does.

Therein, beloved, lies the real joy and comfort and good news of this passage. Our enemy is defeated and he doesn't even see it/know it. Yes, Satan is fully aware of his weakness and limitations and powerlessness in the face of the sovereign God (even with us Satan cannot tempt us beyond what we can bear; God will provide a way out; *He that is in us*, etc.).

But it's not like Satan is going to come before God and admit defeat, right? After round one, Satan was not going to be a good sport and come before God saying *You know, God, you were right after all; grace prevailed. Job persevered just like you said.* No. Of course not!

Satan refuses to admit defeat; he's a relentless enemy who comes right back at God thinking that this new challenge was another way to provoke God, thinking that this time he might prevail. But the irony is, just like we've seen all along in the history of redemption, just like we saw in the arrest, crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ, Satan is not going to prevail. Satan is not going to trick or fool God. Satan is in actuality playing right into God's hands.

## 2) Job's Agonizing Trial and Temptation (6-9)

So that is the New Challenge. Next let's look to verses 6-9 where we consider the agonizing trial and temptation. God agrees to allow Satan to afflict Job, with this exception. Job's life was to be

spared. So Satan goes out, as verse 7 says, and afflicts Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head.

We don't know the exact nature of the sores or disease which afflicted Job. The closest thing we could associate with these sores is a boil. We don't want to get too explicit here, but a boil is an incredibly painful sore. It's an abscess that forms under the skin; it swells, it becomes inflamed, it drains and oozes.

I don't know how many here have been afflicted with a boil, but if you have, you know that one boil is about as much as you can handle. Anyone who's ever been afflicted with a severe case of shingles can also identify with this agony.

Now imagine having not one sore, not a rash of sores over one part of your body, but imagine being covered with these painful sores from head to foot! There are other passages in this book which describe the severity of Job's condition.

You may turn to these passages with me, if you like. In chapter 7 it appears that these sores keep him from any kind of restful sleep—as we might imagine. Job 7: 3-4 Job speaks of the nights as a misery. *When I lie down I think, 'how long before I get up'? The night drags on and I toss till dawn.* Most times we try to escape our misery by sleeping through it. Job cannot.

And when he does sleep, Job is afflicted with terrible nightmares. Vs. 13: *when I think my bed will comfort me and my couch will erase my complaint, even then you frighten me with dreams and terrify me with visions so that I prefer strangling and death rather than this body of mine.*

In chapter 13: 28 he refers to his flesh as something rotten; in chapter 30: 16ff. he speaks of how this disease has pierced his bones, his gnawing pain never ends. In 30: 30 he says that his skin has grown black and peels, his body burns with fever. In chapter 19:17, Job speaks of how his breath is offensive and putrid to his wife. Job 16:16 speaks of his failing vision; 19:20 speaks of his loss of weight and his hint at rotting teeth as well.

As we can guess, his appearance is nothing less than hideous, monstrous; that explains why all throughout chapter 30 Job speaks of how he has become a byword to the people in the city; he is mocked and detested wherever he goes, the sons of the city spit in his face.

This explains why we see him where he is in chapter 2. His pain and agony and discomfort are so great that Job sits on the ash heap, place where they burn the garbage outside the city. This is not only a sign of his great mourning and grief, but also a sign of his being a cast out.

Only a short time ago Job was a man of great wealth, honor and distinction, respected and revered by all who knew him; now was reduced to the status of a miserable wretch. there was no cure, no relief from these sores, from this disease. Job is left to treat himself; he scrapes broken and sharp pieces of pottery across his skin to relieve the itching and discomfort.

Of Job it could truly be said that *he was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. Like one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised and we esteemed him not.*

Once again we see how God continually points us beyond Job, to His own Son, our suffering Savior, Jesus Christ; and God calls us to appreciate all the more the terrible suffering and agony which Christ was made to endure all for the sake of our sins.

Beloved, that just describes Job's circumstances. He had more to cope with than that. Just as Jesus Christ had to continually resist temptation even as he suffered horrendous pain and agony (as for instance, the temptation for Jesus to call down legions of angels to deliver him from his painful death); so too, Job had to resist temptation.

I believe Job's temptation was especially agonizing because it came from the lips of wife own wife. Now, I believe Job's wife gets unfair treatment by many of us as we read this story. We all criticize her and berate her because she should stand by her man, right? What a cruel and terrible and unloving things to say.

But let's remember. Job's wife is the woman who gave birth to and nurtured Job's ten godly children. She would also be the woman who (after all this misery was over) would bear him seven more sons and three more daughters.

And let's not forget that Job's losses are her losses as well. Job's wife had lost her children, her wealth, and (for all intents and purposes) she has now lost her husband as well. So let's not be too quick to judge her or too quick to think that we would have responded any differently.

Clearly, however she relented in the midst of the circumstances and Satan uses her weakness as a means of getting to Job. She becomes Satan's mouthpiece. And again, let's not think of her as yelling at Job or rebuking him. She loves him. She's not blaming any of this on him.

No. Out of concern and love, she comes to her husband and asks *why are you still holding on to your integrity*. She's asking, *what for?* What good has it done you? God has clearly cursed you; you are under His hand of judgment. So what's your faith worth? You've lost everything; your life and now your body has been reduced to nothing. Give it up, man. It's over.

She's not evil. She's not pagan. She's just very shortsighted (as we tend to be at times that like!). She sees no possibility of recovery for Job; what's more she sees nothing worthy about enduring this misery; she sees no profit, no wisdom in prolonging the misery, in postponing the obvious.

In her eyes, the only option left for Job is to die—so why not die sooner than later. Curse God and get it over with. While she was certainly wrong to say what she did, I think we can certainly understand her. We can certainly identify her. It's impossible to say what *we* would do in a situation like that, but as I mentioned Thanksgiving morning, I think it takes far less for us to get angry at God and even to go so far as to wish we were dead.

If the truth be told, I think that most of us come a lot closer to the level of integrity of Job's wife, than Job himself. Who among us has the integrity, the perseverance, the kind of Godly patience that Job exhibited as he endured the accumulating afflictions of his life

That's something we ought to pray for and strive after everyday. "Lord, prepare me for life's trials; make me ready to endure hardships and to face sorrows with firm hope and steadfast faith. Lord, deliver me from the sin and temptation of anger and resentment and bitterness; give me faith to know and believe that you can bring good out of even the most hideous of circumstances.

### **3) Job's Godly Response (10).**

That's exactly what Job believed, and we see evidence of that in verse 10. Here Job presents his Godly response. Now, I don't know about you, but I know how agitated I can get at my loved ones when I'm sick, or when I'm sore, or when I'm tired or feeling under pressure; that's when we have so little patience for others. We get pushed to the edge and we speak harshly to others.

But look at Job! What an amazing man this is! He lost everything he owned, all of his children are dead; he's suffering great grief and sorrow in his heart; added to that his body is racked with painful sores. Now his help-meet, the only loved one left to whom he can turn for comfort, who should have been there as a source of strength for him—she's not telling him to stand strong—no, she came out to the ash heap to tell Job to give up; to curse God and die.

Yet, in the midst of this physical and emotional and even psychological torment and suffering, Job does not bite her head off, he does not call her names. He simply says, *You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God and not trouble?*

You know what Job sees that his wife doesn't, at least at this point? Do you know what it is that enabled Job to say what he said? It's this: Job sees and knows that he's a sinner. Job sees and knows that he is a sinner who doesn't deserve *anything good* from God.

I mentioned before that Job was sitting on the ash heap. That ash heap is not only a sign of mourning but it's a sign of abject humility. In the Bible when people put on sackcloth and ashes, it was as confession of their sin before God. After Jonah preached to Ninevah, they repented and put on sackcloth and ashes. God spared them.

So here, Job is confessing his unworthiness before God. He knows that he deserves evil from God, not good! Again, how many of us respond like this? How often don't we respond to trials by saying, *this isn't fair? Why does this have to happen to me? Or, Why do things like this always seem to happen to me? I don't deserve this!*

Job knows better. Not only that, but Job shows a clear knowledge that God is the one in control of his life. He does not suspect that he is the victim of some cruel joke by the pagan gods, or that somehow the devil is doing all this to him. Job knows, he understands that EVERYTHING that has happened to Him is a result of the sovereign hand of his almighty God.

And in the wake of all this, the Bible applauds and praises Job again: *in all this* (despite all this!) *Job did not sin in what he said.* Yes, as we go on I Job, he says some pretty bold things about God, to which God replies later on. But by God's own accounting, Job never once sins against him by cursing God, by questioning God's righteousness or holiness or justice.

Now, one thing I can say about myself, as I shared with a number of you on Thanksgiving morning, I'm no Job. Few, if any of us are? We men look at Job's patience and perseverance the way a lot of women look to the woman of virtue in Proverbs 31! Who can measure up!?

But what comforts me and you this morning is something we've been alluding to all along. Our text points us ultimately to the only One who ever suffered more than Job suffered. We're pointed to Jesus Christ our Savior--to the One who, like Job, was blameless and upright, who feared God and shunned evil. But unlike Job, Jesus didn't deserve to suffer.

Jesus had no sin, and so he didn't deserve evil from the hand of His Father. Rather, it was for the evil that we had done that Jesus was made to suffer. And of this we can be sure, Christ's suffering was infinitely more intensive than Job's.

But getting back to this phrase a moment, we hear many people, even many ministers preach that God wants us to be happy, God wants to give us good things, that God wants us to be wealthy and healthy. But that's misguided application. What God wants is faithful servants; what God's

wants is a church, a bride filled with integrity; who are willing to submit to His ways, no matter what happens, no matter what God might bring.

Yes, wealth and health and prosperity are physical blessings which accompany the godly life; they are sure signs of God's love. But Hebrews 12: 6 says that discipline, hardship is also a sign of God's love. God disciplines those he loves, and he chastises everyone he accepts as a son.

So as you make your way along in the Christian life, as you encounter your own trials and setbacks, beware of those who would tempt you into thinking that God has somehow let you down; realize that those temptations can come from those very close to you.

Beware of those who teach or preach or advise that God has somehow dealt us a raw hand, that He owes us a few breaks; beware, because that's what the devil wants us to believe. Satan wants us to think that God has forsaken us; that God has turned His hand of punishment against us, or that God has cursed us.

But the reality is that God has promised never to forsake us because He forsook His one and only Son. God has promised never to punish us for our sins—because they are punished in Christ; and God has promised never to curse us, because His Son became a curse for us.

So what do you, what should you, expect from God? You should expect to be treated as a son and daughter of God. And as a faithful son or daughter, you must trust and believe that no matter what befalls you in life, God is in full control, and you have nothing to worry about.

For God bring us both good and evil, both prosperity and adversity, and all that God does, all that He ordains, is designed to purify and strengthen our faith, and glorify and honor His Name. May God be praised in our trials and tribulation, as much OR MORE as He is praised in our times of joy. Amen.