

July 12, 2009 – AM

We have finally arrived at the last in our studies of the book of Job. We've seen Job plunged into appalling suffering and personal tragedy and loss. We've seen him rail against heaven at the injustice of it all. We've listened to Job's three friends accuse and condemn Job for sins he was not guilty of. And we've watched Job wrestle with faith and despair as flashes of extraordinary insight and hope suddenly burst in upon him only to be eclipsed once again by terrible sorrow, anger, and pain.

And then last week we saw God Himself step onto the scene and address Job. God unveiled something of His majesty, took Job on a tour of His works of creation and providence, displayed to Job His wisdom, power, justice, and faithfulness and reminded Job that Job is a creature and God alone is the Creator. And that humility and the recognition that we will not always understand is important to embrace if we are to find our way through the complex maze of life's daily challenges.

This morning we are going to examine Job's response in chapter 40:3-5 and in chapter 42. And the first thing that is very apparent as you survey those passages is that Job is *a changed man*. And I want us to explore that change together this morning under three headings:

First *the path to restoration*. Then secondly *the shape of restoration*, and then finally *the grounds of restoration*. (the path, shape, and grounds of restoration)

First of all, *the path to restoration*.

Put simply the path to restoration for Job is the path of *repentance*. The great Puritan Thomas Watson in his book *The Doctrine of Repentance* described repentance like this: "Repentance is a spiritual medicine made up of six special ingredients: sight of sin, sorrow for sin, confession of sin, shame for sin, hatred of sin, turning from sin. If any one is left out, it loses its virtue." (Thomas Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance*, Banner of Truth, 18)

Well, Job has come to repentance. And as Watson put it, "The eye is made both for seeing and weeping. Sin must first be seen before it can be wept for." Up to this point Job has adamantly refused to see, sorrow for, or confess any sin of his own. He has been so vehement in his defense against the accusations of his three so called

comforters, that he has come to accuse God of wrong doing, while vindicating himself.

But *now*, however, all that has changed. In these two passages Job has, at long last, *come to see himself clearly*. Listen to how he had been talking about himself. Here's chapter 27:6: "My *righteousness* I will hold fast, and will not let it go; *My heart shall not reproach me as long as I live.*"

But as we read these two closing speeches of Job, quite clearly everything has now changed. No matter *what* he had said before, no matter *how* just his cause, despite his vows to the contrary, *now*, suddenly, his heart *does* indeed reproach him. His conscience finally *does* condemn him. He now *sees* himself as a sinner, guilty before God *for the first time in the book*. Look at chapter 40:4, "Behold I am *vile*"; or chapter 42: verse 6, "I *abhor* myself and *repent* in dust and ashes."

In the movie *The Matrix*, the hero, a character called Neo, played by Keanu Reeves, visits the Oracle, who will tell him whether he is or is not "the One," a Messiah-like figure who will deliver the human race from slavery. The oracle is a middle-aged African American woman who is busy baking cookies in her kitchen when Neo arrives. Above the door into the kitchen is plaque bearing the Latin motto, "*temet nosce.*" Neo is asked if he knows what it means. It means "know thyself." Knowing the sometimes shocking, truth about ourselves is a major theme in the movie.

Well, here Job has come to know the shocking truth about himself. And what he sees is humbling in the extreme. He realizes that his former words have been characterized by a lack of *understanding*, and behind that, a lack of *humility*: 42:3, "I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know."

And the result of that sight of sin, for Job, is that now he displays a remarkable change of attitude. Not only is there obvious self-reproach, shame, sorrow, and confession of his errors, there is also a real turning from them: Chapter 40: 4-5, "I lay my hand over my mouth. Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; Yes, twice, but I will proceed no further." Instead of proud words that display a lack of true understanding, before God Job clamps his hand over his mouth and in humility "proceeds no further."

Job has come to *repentance*. In Watson's terms he has come to a true sight of sin, true sorrow for sin, true confession of sin, true shame for sin, hatred of sin, and turning from sin.

But what was it that *brought him* to repentance? How is it that he has made so dramatic a U-turn?

John Calvin gives us a clue. Listen to his words from the opening chapter of his *Institutes*, "It is certain that man *never* achieves a clear knowledge of himself *unless* he has *first* looked upon *God's face*, and then descends from contemplating Him to scrutinize himself. *For we always seem to ourselves righteous and upright and wise and holy*"—(sounds just like Job, doesn't it?) But listen to Calvin: "...this pride is innate in all of us—unless by clear proofs we stand convinced of our own unrighteousness, foulness, folly, and impurity." And then he goes on to make this suggestion, "Suppose we but once begin to raise our thoughts to God, and to ponder His nature, and how completely perfect are His righteousness, wisdom, and power—the straight edge to which we must all be shaped. Then, what masquerading earlier as righteousness was pleasing in us, will soon grow filthy in its consummate wickedness. What wonderfully impressed us under the name of wisdom will stink in its very foolishness. What wore the face of power will prove itself the most miserable weakness. That is, what *in us* seems perfection itself corresponds ill to the purity of God." (*Institutes, I.I.II, 37-8*)

That is exactly what had happened to Job: Chapter 42:1-3, "I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. You asked, 'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know." Did you catch the force of the "*therefore*"? What is it that has led Job to utterly reverse his opinion of himself? It was the tour de force that God had taken him on in chapters 38-41, pointing out the heavens and the earth and all the creatures He had made, reminding Job of His justice and His covenant faithfulness. It was that Job has come to see God. Job himself sums up what has happened to him in verses 5 and 6, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, *But now my eye sees You. Therefore* I abhor myself, And repent in dust and ashes." Job's true sight of himself came only because he had *first* seen something of the glory of God.

Friends, unless and until we come to place our lives against the backdrop of the biblical portrait of the holiness and glory of the Triune God of Holy Scripture; unless

and until we come to recognize that God's law is no mere collection of overbearing prohibitions, but an exposition of God's own character; unless we come to recognize that God is not a cosmic therapist whose sole function is to make you feel better about yourself but the Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty, unless we come to grapple with these things, we will never know ourselves truly *at all*. We will remain ignorant of our deepest spiritual problem. We will not appreciate how utterly lost we are.

But the first step in restoration from that tragic condition, as Job came to realize here, was discovering how lost we really are. Repentance sees the truth about ourselves and turns from sin to cast ourselves on God's sheer mercy alone.

*Repentance is what happens when the blazing bright light of God's purity shines into the filthy den of our sin-stained lives and we see ourselves as we really are.*

Now that may seem to you condemning or harsh, cruel even. "Hasn't Job suffered enough? Surely an encouraging word would have been better placed than *this*?" In Luke 15 Jesus tells the famous parable of the prodigal son. The prodigal takes his inheritance, turns his back on his father, and squanders it all away on selfish and profligate living. In Luke 15:17 we meet him, grubbing in the dirt, competing with the pigs for slops to eat, so low had he sunk. But then, Jesus says, "*he came to himself.*" He suddenly saw the horrible truth about himself. And the result of that moment of clarity was his return home, his restoration to his family, his reconciliation with his father. Now if we were to offer the prodigal son a choice: he can exchange that awful moment of insight into his terrible, degraded situation for some soft, comforting words, promising him that one day it'd all come good, while he stays there in the mud with the pigs, or he can face the truth about himself, as hard as that sight may be to bear, come to himself, and return home to the only place where there is deliverance for him. Which do you think he'd take?

There is no question about which option he'd take. That moment of clarity about himself, as terrible as it must have been, led to his *restoration*. Soft words, may have soothed and comforted at the time, but they'd have left him in the pigsty in the end.

Now the question we must face is simply which will we choose? Will you bring your life into the light of God's holiness, reflected in His law, as uncomfortable as that process can be? Will you measure yourself against what Calvin called "the straightedge" of His character and discover the awful truth about your sin? Or will you

look for someone to whisper kind words and empty promises of a happily-ever-after ending that will never come? Only the first road leads to restoration.

So first of all, the path to restoration is true repentance. Then secondly, there is *the shape of restoration*.

Look at chapter 42, verses 7-17, please. The shape of Job's restoration takes the form, primarily, of reconciled and renewed *relationships*. And there are three sets of them in this passage. The first restored relationship is *reconciliation to God*. Job is reconciled to God. In verses 7-9 God confronts and rebukes Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. And He calls them to solicit Job's prayers for them as the condition upon which God would forgive these men their sin. And verse 9 explains why, by pointing out God's attitude to Job, "the LORD had accepted Job." In the remainder of the chapter all the other restored relationships and restored blessings that come to Job come *as a result of this one relationship* being restored. Each is prefaced by the statement that it is the LORD who did it.

Because the LORD accepted Job, verse 9, the Lord restored Job's losses, verse 10; the LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than the former, verse 12. And it is important to see the order here. Job is reconciled to God, and in the wake of that restored relationship, his other relationships are renewed. My point here is not to say that if you get right with God then everything else will fall into place. We've seen enough of that kind of wrong thinking as we've worked through Job to know it doesn't work that way.

My point rather is to make it clear that Job is reconciled to God without reference to the practical benefits in his life. What matters to Job now is not his external condition. He is still suffering physical illness and economic and practical ruin when he is reconciled. Job does not go after God *in order to have God bless his life with restored prosperity*. He goes after God because now he knows that life is about glorifying God and enjoying Him forever, not *using* God and enjoying His benefits forever. *He wants God not for His gift but for Himself. What matters now to Job is a restored relationship with God for its own sake, rather than as a means to an end.*

Until we see the sinfulness of sin, and hate it, not because it hurts *us*, or because it may have practical consequences in *our* lives, but because it *offends our God whom we have come to love and adore*, until we see our sin as hateful for its offense against God, we have not repented of our sins at all. We are merely using

repentance as *leverage* to mitigate the worst effects of our transgressions. *Some of us need to repent of our repentance. And seek reconciliation with God for His own sake.* Those who would live in restored relationship with God must seek God for Himself, not for His blessings. We love Him for who He is in His glory, greatness, and grace, not for the benefits we can derive from Him. God is not, and will not be, a means to our own comforts. He wants to be the object of our adoration and delight.

Job is restored to God. And then Job is restored to His three friends. God rebukes them, as I said, in verses 7-8, and then calls them to request Job's intercession on their behalf. And in many ways Job's intercession for these friends is the hinge on which this whole chapter turns. Look at verses 9-10, "So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite *and* Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the LORD commanded them; for the LORD had accepted Job. And the LORD restored Job's losses *when he prayed for his friends.* Indeed the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before."

Now note verse 10, "the LORD restored Job's losses *when he prayed* for his friends." Job had to pray for his friends *selflessly*, while still in his loss and pain and illness and need. He had to forgive others as he himself had been forgiven, without reference to the benefits to himself, thus demonstrating the reality of his repentance. It is in response to this that God blesses Job's life with abundance once again.

One of the great marks of true repentance is a heart that bears no grudge. A heart that has been reconciled to God seeks reconciliation with others. The claim that God has forgiven your sin, that you are a Christian, is incompatible with allowing a root of bitterness to continue to grow in your heart towards others. Almost every Lord's Day we pray, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." We recognize that forgiveness with God overflows in forgiving others. A heart that seeks reconciliation with God that will not seek restoration of relationships with others, even those who wound us deeply, is one that has not yet truly learned the meaning of repentance.

And the third relationship here is with family. It is part of Job's restored blessedness that brothers and sisters gather around him, verse 11, and he has more children, which presumably means that his relationship with his wife has also been restored. Remember her earlier counsel to Job? Do you still cling to your integrity? Curse God and die, Job! But now Job has ten more children: seven sons and three daughters. And clearly here, Job dotes on his daughters. He names them Jemimah,

Keziah and Keren-Happuch, which mean “Dove,” “Cinnamon,” and “Container of Antimony,” (which was an expensive and precious eye shadow). Job is thrilled with his children and prizes his daughters. And in verse 15 we read that Job gives the daughters an inheritance along with the sons, which was highly unusual in the culture of the day.

All of that to say Job enjoys restored and renewed relationships with his family. And I don’t want to say too much about that except that family is one of God’s richest blessings. When God wished to display His grace to Job, one of the ways in which He did it was to restore to him children and wife and relatives. Some of us may need to adjust our perspective as we evaluate family, in the light of God’s Word. Family is one of God’s great blessings. Do you prize it and cherish it and build on it?

So the path to restoration is the path of repentance. The shape or evidence of restoration is restored relationships, with God, with others, and with family. And then finally, *the grounds or basis for restoration*.

And here, I want to focus again on the incident with Job and his three friends in verses 7-10. In order for Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar to obtain forgiveness from God, they were required to bring sacrifices to Job and offer them to the Lord and have Job intercede for them.

Remember how Job had felt back before God had met him? He had longed for a redeemer, one to plead his cause before God. A few times he had ascended to lofty heights of faith that such a redeemer lives who will mediate between him and the Lord who had turned against him. Well, *now Job* is made to play the role of mediator himself. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar stand under the wrath of God. Their sin has been exposed. And only Job can deliver them.

Job himself becomes a picture to us of the only mediator between God and man—the man Christ Jesus. As the bulls and rams are slaughtered to atone for sin, so Jesus Christ offered Himself once for sin to bring us to God. As Job was uniquely able to intercede for them because the LORD had accepted him, so Jesus Christ ever lives to make intercession for us because the Lord has accepted Him, and in Him accepts all who believe. The basis for restoration is blood atonement and the intercession of the mediator whom God accepts. Job serves that role here as a picture to us of the one

who performs that function perfectly. The true basis for restoration is the cross and intercession of Jesus Christ.

Looking only to the Cross of Christ to pay for the guilt of your sin, can you have any confidence that your repentance will not fall on deaf ears in the courts of heaven. Because Jesus died bearing our condemnation, as we turn from our sin in true repentance, resting on Christ alone in true faith, we can never be turned away. No one who ever went to Christ for forgiveness for sin and seeking mercy ever left without it. No one who ever looked to the Cross for pardon failed to obtain it. We must learn from Job the true meaning and importance of repentance. A penitent heart is the best response to the glory of God. We must repent for God's own sake, not for God's rich blessings. And we must do it looking to the cross of Christ. The fruit of such repentance will be restored relationships with God and with others.

My prayer for you all today is that you will practice the grace of repentance and now the joy of restoration to the glory of God. Amen.