

The title of this morning's sermon is, *"God's Compassion and Mercy to Job and Us."*

We're going to be in the Book of Job this morning if you'd like to turn there.

[Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms].

This sermon was on my heart w/ the trial we're experiencing w/ the Coronavirus.

Let me begin w/ an important point...

Trials and temptations are NOT the same:

- Trials are tests from God. He has a special purpose in them.
- Temptations on the other hand do not come from God: **James 1:13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.**

Think of it like this:

- God uses trials to test us to bring out the best in us.
- The devil uses temptations to try to bring out the worst in us.

But even though trials and temptations aren't the same, there is a common temptation we face in EVERY trial and it's the temptation to get angry with God.

This is exactly what Satan said Job would do if God allowed trials in his life. Look at **Job 1:11**...

Job 1:11 Stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!"

Job is wealthy and prosperous and if you take his stuff, he'll curse you!

Look at Job 2:5...

Job 2:5 Stretch out Your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!"

If you hurt Job physically he'll curse you!

Sadly, Job's wife even told him to curse God. Look at **Job 2:9**...

Job 2:9 "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!"

What a wonderful wife! I have no idea how one of the greatest men in history ended up w/ this woman.

If you've ever wondered why Satan killed everyone else in Job's life, but let her live, you're looking at the answer. She was his servant!

But look at Job's response....

Job 2:10 But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

He rebuked her.

Look at **Job 13:15**...

Job 13:15 Though He slay me, yet WILL I TRUST HIM.

Pause right here...

Job said: "*No matter what happens, I will continue to trust Him.*"

This is what it looks like to persevere through trials: we maintain our faith in God.

And this is why Job is listed as the example of a persevering saint in the New Testament...

James 5:11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

Job is NT example of a persevering saint. This is fitting, b/c if anyone must've been tempted to NOT persevere, it was him!

When we think about persevering through trials, we don't want to compare ourselves with Job, do we?

It's discouraging thinking we have to be like him, or persevere as well as he did?

But the truth is I think the fact that Job is chosen as a persevering saint should be very encouraging. And here's why...

Job was far from perfect during his trials...and this brings us to Lesson 1...

LESSON 1: PERSEVERANCE DOESN'T MEAN PERFECTION.

Listen to these familiar verses...

Jam 1:2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing

Trials perfect us – or you could say they bring us closer to perfection – which means we’re not already perfect. As a result, when we go through trials, we’re not going to handle them perfectly.

The word for **patience** in **James 1:2-4** is the same word for perseverance in **James 5:11** when it says **You have heard of the perseverance of Job.**

It’s as though **James 5:11** says, “*You have heard of the PATIENCE of Job,*” which is how it’s translated in some bibles.

But let me ask you this:

- Did Job seem patient during his trials?
- Did he sit there quietly, calmly, while suffering, praising God saying, “*Someday James is going to write about counting it all joy when we fall into various trials and I’m experiencing the worst trials imaginable, so I can’t tell you how much joy I’m experiencing.*”

Nope.

Look at the rest of **Job 13:15**...

Job 13:15b Even so, I WILL DEFEND MY OWN WAYS BEFORE HIM.

And Job did!

Turn to **Job 9**....

As we read these verses, ask yourself:

- Does Job look patient?
- Does he look like he’s persevering patiently?

Job 9:23 If the scourge (or disease) slays suddenly, He (this is God) laughs at the plight of the innocent.

This is a terrible criticism: Job said God laughs when **innocent** people suffer.

Many people have this same criticism of God regarding the Coronavirus. How could He let something like this happen.

Please turn to **Job 21:4**...

Job 21:4a As for me, is my complaint against man?

He's saying, "I don't have a problem w/ man. I have a problem w/ God!"

This chapter is really one long criticism of God for allowing the wicked to prosper. Let me show you just a few of the verses. Look at **verse 9**...

Job 21:9 The houses of the wicked are safe from fear, neither is the rod (which refers to punishment) of God upon them.

He says the wicked are safe from God's judgment, b/c He never punishes them. This makes God sound unjust.

Look at **verse 17**...

Job 21:17 How often is the lamp of the wicked put out? How often does their destruction come upon them, the sorrows God distributes in His anger?

He says the wicked never have their lives brought to an end early. They get to live to a good, old age, and God never gives them trouble or sorrow.

Turn to **Job 24:12** so I can show you another terrible criticism...

Job 24:12 The dying groan in the city, And the souls of the wounded cry out; Yet GOD DOES NOT CHARGE THEM (he means the ones responsible) with wrong.

He's accusing God of being unconcerned w/ those suffering, and being unjust b/c He doesn't punish those who cause the suffering.

On top of Job's accusations against God, he was also self-righteous. Turn to **Job 31**...

This is his final speech to his friends and it oozes w/ pride. All of Job's words are basically about his goodness and innocence. We'll look at the last few verses, starting at **verse 35**...

Job 31:35 Oh, that I had one to hear me!

Here is my mark (or signature).

Oh, that the Almighty would answer me,

That my Prosecutor had written a book!

In most translations Job said, "*Let the Almighty answer me!*" He feels entitled to hear from God regarding what he's suffered b/c he thinks so innocent. He wishes God tried to write a book about his sins: "*Let Him try to put in writing how bad I've been.*"

**Job 31:36 Surely I would carry it (any accusation) on my shoulder,
And bind it on me like a crown;**

The accusations that could be brought against him are so few and insignificant that he'd be happy to wear them **on [his] shoulder** or **like a crown** for everyone to see b/c he's been so righteous.

**Job 31:37 I would declare to Him the number of my steps;
Like a prince I would approach Him.**

He says he'd tell God everything he's done – every **step** he's taken – b/c he doesn't think he's done anything wrong. He'd **approach** God the way **a prince** approaching a king.

**Job 31:38 “If my land cries out against me,
And its furrows weep together;
39 If I have eaten its fruit without money,
Or caused its owners to lose their lives;
40 Then let thistles grow instead of wheat,
And weeds instead of barley.”
The words of Job are ended.**

He says he's so innocent even the land he owns can't accuse him of anything.

Look at the first verse of **chapter 32**...

Job 32:1 So these three men (Job's friends) ceased answering Job, because (and notice this...) he WAS RIGHTEOUS IN HIS OWN EYES.

Job's friends didn't have anything else to say, b/c of the way he viewed himself.

Jesus told The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector and in **Luke 18:9** it says...

He spoke this parable to some WHO TRUSTED IN THEMSELVES THAT THEY WERE RIGHTEOUS, and despised others.

Job was dangerously close to being like this...or perhaps he already was.

And here's the point...

James 5:11 says **YOU HAVE HEARD OF THE PERSEVERANCE** (or patience) **OF JOB** – but through parts of the book, how did he sound?

He sounded:

- Impatient...
- Angry...
- Critical of God...
- Proudful...
- He struggled...

- He questioned...
- He doubted...

So how can it say he was patient? How can it say he persevered?

The answer is...

He kept his faith in God...which is the same way everyone perseveres through trials.

And it's a blessing to me that he didn't need to be perfect while persevering.

Let me be clear about what I'm doing and not doing...

I'm not trying to encourage:

- Any self-righteousness
- Any disrespect toward God
- Any irreverence in our relationships w/ Him

But I am trying to encourage you that persevering through trials doesn't mean being perfect:

- We might be impatient...
- We might be angry...
- We might struggle...
- We might doubt...
- We might question...

We just want to make sure we hold fast to our faith.

Job is a good example in this way, and he's a good example in another way...

In the next few chapters – 32 to 37 – Elihu speaks. And THEN guess who starts talking to – or I should say starts questioning – Job in chapter 38?

God!

God questions Job, and then he responds in chapter 40. Please turn there...

Job 40:3 Then Job answered the LORD and said: 4a “Behold, I am vile;

This is quite a change from earlier chapters isn't it? Job was **righteous in his own eyes** and now he's **vile [in his own eyes]**.

Job 40:4b What shall I answer You?

I lay my hand over my mouth.

5 Once I have spoken, but I will not answer;

Yes, twice, but I will proceed no further.”

What did Job basically say?

“I should’ve kept my mouth shut.”

He wanted an audience w/ God, but it didn’t go the way he thought it would.

Sometimes I have to wonder how many people – like Job – wish they could have their day in court w/ God. They think – like Job did – that they have some accusation to bring against Him.

But let me ask you this...

- If God didn’t need to explain Himself to Job – and He didn’t need to...
- And He allowed Job to experience some of the most terrible trials imaginable...trials that look like they deserve an explanation...

Why would we think He needs to explain Himself to us?

We shouldn’t think that, b/c He doesn’t need to explain Himself to us. That’s what it means to be God. He gets to do what He wants.

Psa 115:3 Our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases.

Not whatever pleases us, but whatever pleases Him.

Look at **Job 42** where Job speaks again...

Job 42:1 Then Job answered the LORD and said:

2 “I know that You can do everything,

And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You.

3 You asked, ‘Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?’

Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand (again he feels like he spoke when he should’ve remained silent),

Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

4 Listen, please, and let me speak;

You said, ‘I will question you, and you shall answer Me.’

5 “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear,

But now my eye sees You.

6 Therefore I abhor myself (previously he felt vile, and now he hates himself),

And repent in dust and ashes.”

Please notice that beautiful word in **verse 6: repent!**

This is almost a bad word w/ some Christians, but the fact is God loved Job enough to bring him to this point where the pride and self-righteousness could be removed.

And here’s the point...

Trials can have this same purifying affect in our lives.

So here's the balance w/ Job...

- We can learn from his example that perseverance doesn't mean perfection
- But we can also learn from his example that if we are impatient, angry, self-righteous, or critical of God we should repent.

Go ahead and take your minds back to **Jam 5:11**...

James 5:11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

Notice it says **the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.**

Where are some places in Scripture we'd expect to read these words?

I'm going to give you a few examples that came to mind for me...

Manasseh was the wickedest king in the OT. It seemed like there was no false god he didn't worship, and no command he didn't break, including sacrificing his own sons. God punished him by taking him into captivity. When that happened, listen to this...

2 Chr 33:12 When [Manasseh] was in affliction, he implored the LORD...humbled himself greatly...13 prayed to Him; and [God] received his entreaty...and BROUGHT HIM BACK TO JERUSALEM INTO HIS KINGDOM.

That's pretty merciful: God didn't just forgive Manasseh, He even restored him as king.

The Ninevites were some of the wickedest people in the OT, but when they repented God spared them. Jonah was so angry about them being able to live that he wanted to die.

God rebuked Jonah saying...

Jonah 4:11 Should I not pity that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left?"

God had compassion even on these evil people! This makes Him look very compassionate and merciful.

Listen to this part of the Parable of the Prodigal Son...

Luke 15:20 [The Prodigal Son] arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and HAD COMPASSION, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

The father represents God. This makes Him look **very compassionate and merciful**.

When Jesus was being crucified...

Luke 23:34 He prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.”

Jesus prayed for the forgiveness of people crucifying Him. This looks **very compassionate and merciful**.

These are the types of places we might expect to read those words.

But we read this in a verse about Job!

My suspicion is...

- If someone said, “*Show me an example in Scripture of God being **compassionate and merciful***” you wouldn’t take them to Job.
- But James 5:11 says that even w/ Job, God was still **very compassionate and merciful**.

And if we can read about the man who suffered the worst trials in history AND it can still say these words, that tells us something about God that we need to keep in mind. And this brings us to Lesson 2...

LESSON 2: EVEN IN THE WORST TRIALS “THE LORD IS [STILL] VERY COMPASSIONATE AND MERCIFUL”

Trials – especially those Job experienced – don’t make God look **VERY compassionate and merciful**.

If anything, they make God look like He’s NOT compassionate and merciful. We tend to think if God was **compassionate and merciful** He wouldn’t let people experience trials.

Remembering God’s character is always important, but let me give you three reasons it’s even more important during trials...

First, we must remember God’s character – that He’s compassionate and merciful – when we’re suffering, b/c that’s when we’re most tempted to think He isn’t this way. When we’re suffering, we almost must make a conscious decision to view God this way.

Second, when we’re suffering it can be a great encouragement to remember God’s character. We can tell ourselves that no matter what we’re going through, there’s still an amount of compassion and mercy God is showing us.

The third reason it’s important to remember God is compassionate and merciful is it helps us resist the temptation to sin against God.

- Trials tempt us to get angry w/ Him, question Him – or perhaps worst of all – turn from Him.
- So we need to remind ourselves that even in the worst trials **the Lord is [still] very compassionate and merciful.**

And here's the obvious question...

HOW was God **compassionate and merciful** to Job when he was suffering?

There are actually a number of ways...and this brings us to Lesson 3...

LESSON 3: GOD WAS COMPASSIONATE AND MERCIFUL IN THAT HE (PART I) RESTRICTED WHAT SATAN COULD DO.

God put restrictions on what Satan could do to Job. We might not be comfortable w/ those restrictions, and they might not be the restrictions we'd like God to set, but there were restrictions nonetheless.

Look at **Job 1:9**...

Job 1:9 So Satan answered the Lord and said, “Does Job fear God for nothing? 10a Have You not **MADE A HEDGE AROUND HIM, AROUND HIS HOUSEHOLD, AND AROUND ALL THAT HE HAS ON EVERY SIDE?**

Satan accused God of protecting him TOO well!

Look at **verse 12**...

Job 1:12 And the Lord said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your power; only **DO NOT LAY A HAND ON HIS PERSON.**”

Even more restrictions on Satan. At this point he couldn't touch him personally.

Look at **verse 6**...

Job 2:6 The LORD said to Satan, “Behold, he *is* in your hand, **BUT SPARE HIS LIFE.**”

And more restrictions. God's Satan from killing him.

When people are suffering it's a bad idea to say, “It could be worse.”

But the truth is, it could be.

And the other truth is, it's not as bad as it could be, b/c God's merciful and compassionate.

The next part of Lesson 3...

LESSON 3: GOD WAS COMPASSIONATE AND MERCIFUL IN THAT HE (PART II) DIDN'T PUNISH JOB.

When you look at all Job suffered, you might be quick to say, *“Wow, God must’ve been so angry w/ him.”*

But that’s not true at all. It’s the opposite. God was very pleased w/ him!

Understanding how highly God thought of Job is important, b/c if Job was a terrible man, we’d think that’s why he suffered...or in other words, we’d think the same thing Job’s friends thought: he suffered b/c he was so bad.

But instead, look at **Job 1:8**...

Job 1:8 Then the Lord said to Satan, **“Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?”**

This is probably one of the best descriptions of anyone in all of history!

After Satan afflicted Job, look at **Job 2:3**...

Job 2:3 Then the Lord said to Satan, **“Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause.”**

God thought Job was wonderful!

So you say, *“Then why did God do so much to him if He was pleased w/ him?”*

God wasn’t the one that did this to Job. Satan did. As we just talked about, God restricted what Satan could do.

So here’s my point...

God never punished Job, even once, throughout the whole book. The closest was the rebuke he received at the end, but that’s it.

So how does this reveal God’s compassion and mercy?

Job was a tremendous man, but...

- He criticized God.
- He accused Him.

- He was demanding...He said God should give him an audience and explain why he was suffering so much.
- He acted self-righteously, declaring his innocence and goodness...and even this was a criticism of God b/c it was as though he said God wasn't treating him the way he deserved.

You say, *“Okay, well you're criticizing Job, but how are you pointing out God's compassion and mercy?”*

God's **compassion and mercy** was revealed when He showed up...

And didn't punish Job for the ways he acted.

Most parents wouldn't let their children talk the way Job talked, but God let Job do that and all He did was ask him some difficult questions.

While I'm sure none of us would like being questioned the way Job was questioned, I think we can say – considering the way Job accused God and criticized Him – God was being **compassionate and merciful** to him.

The last part of Lesson 3...

LESSON 3: GOD WAS COMPASSIONATE AND MERCIFUL IN THAT HE (PART III) BLESSED JOB WHEN THE TRIALS WERE OVER.

James 5:11 says **Indeed we count them blessed who endure.**

In other words, there's a blessing when we endure – or persevere – through trials, and Job is a great example.

Look w/ me at **Job 42**...

Job 42:10 **And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job, when he had prayed for his friends. And the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.**

Skip to verse 12...

Job 42:12 **And the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning. And he had 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 yoke of oxen, and 1,000 female donkeys. 13 He had also seven sons and three daughters. 14 And he called the name of the first daughter Jemimah, and the name of the second Keziah, and the name of the third Keren-happuch. 15 And in all the land there were no women so beautiful as Job's daughters. And their father gave them an inheritance among their brothers. 16 And after this Job lived 140 years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, four generations. 17 And Job died, an old man, and full of days.**

So another way **the Lord is [shown to be] very compassionate and merciful** to Job is in the way He blessed him when his trials were over.

I know what you're saying...

Is it the same for us? If we persevere through trials, are we blessed?

We're blessed w/ greater character and maturity.

Sometimes we're also blessed in other ways, as was the case w/ Job.

But if He doesn't reward us in this life, then He'll reward us in the next life. Earlier in the book of James he wrote...

Jam 1:12 Blessed is the man who perseveres through trials, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

The crown of life is a way to refer to salvation or eternal life.

When we persevere through trials, it reveals our faith is genuine, and the reward for genuine faith is salvation.

We don't like trials, but one of the blessings of them is they give us confidence in our salvation.

When we go through trials it's a revelation of where we are spiritually. We can see quickly whether our hope is in the Lord or in our circumstances.

Our faith during trials can also be a great evangelistic tool...

People are looking at us. Let's be a light to the hurting, confused world around us by revealing our faith is in the Lord.

Let me close w/ this quote from Randy Smith...

“Trials can devastate us because we are often looking at how they're affecting our lives. Yet when we can die to self and desire God's glory as a result of them, we are given an entirely different outlook. We can rejoice if we know God's name and God's glory is being magnified through our response. How? When others see our Christlike attitude – gratitude verses complaining, kindness verses anger, faith verses anxiety, contentment verses greed and joy verses bitterness – God is glorified. It means very little when godly character and spiritual fruit only appear when things are going well in our lives.”

Let's pray.