

Rev Andrew Coghill: Job 42

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Preacher: Guest Preacher

[0:00] Job 42 would read in verses 9 and 10. So Eli phas the teamonite and build ad the shoe height and so far the neomothite went and did what the Lord had told them and the Lord accepted Job's prayer.

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.

What we have here at the end of the book of Job is what we might call the prayer of the crushed. If you are not familiar with the contents of the book of Job then you should read it. Some of it is quite heavy going.

A lot of it is quite heavy going. But then some of life is pretty heavy going in real life. That is the whole point about the book of Job. Bad things happen to good people.

Often nobody seems to understand and sometimes it can seem as if even the Lord himself has turned against us.

[1:12] That is a reality which I am sure many people have been familiar with. Bad things happen to good people. Sometimes it seems as if even the Lord has turned against us. Job was a non-Israelite. Chapter 1 at verse 1 we read that he is from the land of us which is thought to have been in the northern part of the Arabian Peninsula, west of the Euphrates.

The land is named after us, the grandson of Shem, of whom we read in Genesis 10, verse 23. If I hear a whole lot of rustling papers I will know you are looking up just to see whether that is the case.

Genesis 10, 23 is where we have us, the grandson of Shem, from whom this section of land almost certainly takes its name. What is significant about this is that although us was not himself the one through whom the covenant line continued, he had obviously been close enough to the worship and witness of the God of Shem, the living and true God that Shem and the covenant line worshipped, to have been exposed to it, to have imparted the knowledge of the true God to his own descendants since Job is himself clearly a worshipper of the living and true God.

Job having endured horrendous suffering, which the Lord has allowed, is tackled by his three friends who keep trying to convince him that he must be an evil doer because after all a righteous God would bless the good and punish the wicked. And look with all that Job is suffering, he must be being punished for something.

Such an argument would have been greatly strengthened by listing the mighty works of God in destroying the likes of Sodom and Gomorrah or in bringing the Israelites out of Egypt, but the Book of Job, you'll notice, knows nothing of these things. Although it does appear to know about the flood, that's hinted at in chapter 22, verses 15 to 17 there, all of which together with quite a number of other factors imply that the Book of Job is extremely ancient, dating from a patriarchal time before Abraham, when the God of Shem is still worshipped by some, sacrifices are offered in faith by the heads of households, there is no established priesthood, no laws of Moses, no temple or tabernacle and no official altar, none of that has happened yet, because this is such an ancient book.

[4:02] The Book of Job is written in Hebrew with occasional expressions in Arabic and Syriac, or Aramaic, which are both languages related to Hebrew, all three being Semitic languages, which of course, as I'm sure you know, it means Shemitic derived from the peoples of Shem in that sense, and this again implies the Book to have been written from a time before the languages of the earth were confounded at the Tower of Babel. Given that Moses is the one who first wrote down the books of Genesis through the Deuteronomy, and Moses didn't live till hundreds of years after Job, this makes the Book of Job almost certainly the oldest written book of the Bible, perhaps the oldest written book ever, full stop.

Why does that matter? Why do we keep going on about that? Well, the point is because the whole theme of the Book of Job is about the seemingly unjustified suffering of the innocent and the good, that bad things happen to good people, that it can seem like God himself is against you for no reason, and therefore this problem is a very ancient one.

The human condition has always been thus since the fall. It's not a recent development, and it's not just you, if it has been you.

So back then to our text, and we read, I say, verses 9 and 10. So Eli Phaaaz, the team and I, the builder of the Shuhai, so far the name of the I, went and did what the Lord had told him, and the Lord accepted Job's prayer, 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.

Now every text has a context, of course. What is the context here? Job has been utterly crushed. From being a good and upright man, rich and well-faithful, God-fearing and worshiping regularly, he is in one day deprived of everything he holds dear.

[6 : 31] And the reason God allows it is to test and prove him. The devil had insinuated that Job served the Lord only because it was to his material advantage.

God thus allowed Job to be tried and tested and to suffer in order to prove to the devil that Job's righteousness was not merely self-serving materialism, that he would still be good and faithful and righteous even in the midst of bereavement and financial ruin and physical pain.

And he was. The unfolding chapters of the book make it clear that long before his three so-called friends come to share with him in his grief, Job has been spurned, reviled, mocked and attacked by the lowlifes of his day, who are truly happy to see a once great man brought down lower than they themselves are. When his three friends tried to get him to confess or admit to some kind of wickedness, which must surely have provoked the Lord to thus punishing him, Job clings doggedly to the idea of his own innocence. He does not go the length of accusing God, but it is pretty clear that he feels himself to have got a raw deal.

But he holds fast to his faith and to his own integrity. Then, when all his friends and accusers have given up trying to persuade him, the Lord at chapter 38 speaks directly to Job, and for four chapters recounts the great and powerful works of God, berating Job with the indisputable facts of God's own power and glory, that he is God, and he has power and right and authority to do as he sees fit with what is his own.

Job tries to speak briefly at the beginning of chapter 40, but God is not finished and keeps on going. After all that he has been through, having done nothing to provoke it, and with God having allowed it, and God having allowed it all, and now the Lord Job's last refuge for hope and vindication, the one to whom he has looked to deliver him, now he, the Lord, seems to be angry with Job, to have turned against him in the midst of his suffering and misery. Like everything in the Old Testament, of course, ultimately it points us to Christ, who can fail to remember our Lord upon the cross as the wrath of God is poured out upon the sin born there by the Son of God himself, so very innocent. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And for Job too, the fury of the Lord seems to just go on and on and on, chapter after chapter until at last at the beginning of this final chapter. Job simply surrenders in hopelessness. Then Job answered the Lord and said,

[10 : 03] I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge? Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand. Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know, and then he's almost recounting what he himself had said, here and I will speak, I will question you and make known to me. I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.

Now he abhors himself and repents, the very name Job is derived from an Arabic word meaning repentance. He repents of any form of presumption, oh goodness knows he was not aware of presumption before, but as the Lord has revealed his own glory and majesty and awesome power to Job, so Job's own importance has diminished in his own eyes, his own thoughts of righteousness, his own thoughts of his own goodness, his own sense of goodness and worth shattered by the knowledge and appearance of the one who is himself perfect goodness, divine lay precious, Job is overwhelmed, he has nothing to fall back on, all thoughts of vindication evaporate, he is utterly crushed.

Have you ever felt like that? Do you feel like that now? You have spent a lifetime perhaps doing your best, living as faithfully and God honouringly as you can, and yet perhaps one thing after

another seems to have gone against you, you've lost or been deprived perhaps of much that is dear to you, and whilst maybe not suffering as dramatically as Job yet still having looked for help and deliverance from the Lord and from no one else, it has seemed to you as though he too now turned against you, perhaps he did, and he will have done so for the reasons that he himself thought fit, and you and I cannot dispute them because you cannot compete with him, you have no strength for your crushed and broken, finished, but God, but God is not finished, not with you, not with Job, for of this crushed and broken soul, the Lord says this, we see it at verses 7 and 8, after the Lord had spoken these words to Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the teamerite and I, my anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken to me what is right as my servant Job has. Now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves, and my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer, not to deal with you according to your folly, for you have not spoken to me what is right as my servant Job has. You should notice that there is no direct instruction or command from the Lord to Job to pray for his former tormentors, you know, we might think of them all sitting in a group, and when God speaks to one lot or the other one hears it anyway, but we're not told that, God is not actually speaking to Job here, he's giving instructions to Eliphaz the teamerite and build out the shoe hat, and so far the Nehemiah the teamerite saying you go to Job, the very fact that they are told to go and get these sacrificial animals and go to Job would imply that they're not actually all just sitting in a wee circle right there.

[14:34] He is not speaking directly to Job here, he is not giving him instructions, he's, look I'm going to talk to your friends here, I'm going to tell them to come to you and when they do, make sure you pray for them. He doesn't say anything at this stage to Job, there is no direct instruction or command from the Lord to Job to pray for his former tormentors.

It is almost as though Job has been made so compliant now to the Lord's will that he needs no such instruction.

God tells the others that Job will do this, it is like a prediction, a prophecy, there is such an assurance of certainty that Job will do as God has said that no element of doubt or necessity of command even enters.

It is predicted and it is done. The three friends, they obey because they are commanded, Job does as the Lord has said without command, without instruction, without the need for orders.

God has said it, so Job just does it. There is almost a sense of tranquility, of smooth unquestioning conformity to the will of God.

[16:02] As one writer has put it, it's not by striving, he says, not by struggling but only by yielding. Can we become like Christ? That is the beginning.

The beginning of what? The beginning of new life and new relationship. The believer's will and independence has been broken, crushed.

And in its place an open dependence on God prevails, a dependence that breathes in the will of God by the Spirit of God.

The old self-will is broken, the astonishing peace of God's tranquil spirit taking its place.

Now we might be tempted to think, well come on, there was no need for all this, Lord. I would have done what you wanted ages ago. You could have stopped short before you ground me down, quite so low. You didn't have to completely crush me.

[17:14] I would have just done whatever you wanted anyway but we do not know the depths of our own hearts. God does. We do not know the extent of our self-will, the way that he sees it. Peace, if you think about it. Peace comes only at the end of a war.

How do wars end? When one side has emerged victorious and the other is utterly defeated. In a test you can have a truce and a temporary cessation and a ceasefire for a wee while but you only get a war ending when one side is completely defeated and the other is completely victorious.

If you take upon yourself to wrestle with God, to struggle and question and argue, you simply have no idea, like Job, of the vastness and greatness and majesty of the power you are taking on.

Against an unbeatable power there can be no self-victory and the extent of our own damage will be dependent only upon how quickly we surrender.

But how sweet is the peace of a surrendered soul. How deep the tranquility, how ready now to do the Lord's bidding, the Lord's will to be moved by His Spirit to obey His word without laws and commands.

[19 : 03] God doesn't speak to Job, he didn't say do this now for your three friends. Job doesn't need to be told when the Spirit of the Lord is what we breathe in.

We may end up doing that which God may have commanded or caused to be written down in stone but that's not why we do it. We don't do it out of slavish fear or out of tyrannical obedience, we do it because the Spirit of God moves the heart of men and women to love what He has given, to desire to do His will and to obey from their innermost being, to be moved by His Spirit to obey His word without laws and commands and regulations compelling us. We are moved by His Spirit to do by love.

That which once His people had to be made to do by law. We see it verse 8 what the Lord says, He says there, my seventh Job, go take the seven bulls, my seventh Job shall pray for you for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly for you have not spoken of me what is right as my seventh Job has.

Yes, He will do as the Lord has said without being asked, without being told. These three men have argued with Him, verbally attacked Him, deprived Him of comfort and deprived Him even of peace and God Himself has all but turned upon Job and now from this crushed and broken state He is somehow meant to summon the grace and strength to pray not for Himself but for His tormentors. Job's will may indeed be conformed to the Lord's will but the means to do it surely He no longer possesses for He is spent.

[21 : 08] The bruised reed all but broken, the smoking flax all but quenched. Where does the strength come from to pray the prayer of the crushed?

I suggest to you that it comes from the last and the last final drop of faith and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God for by grace you save through faith and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God. If God requires something of us, He will give what we need to do it.

You may not possess that last drop, you may not possess that last breath but He will give it to you if He requires you to act on His behalf.

When the Lord sent Elijah to be fed by the widow of Zarathath, he didn't say go to this widow woman she's rich, she's got a whole bakery full of bread, she's absolutely loaded. You'll never have any worries about food or drink or anything.

[22 : 25] She's given the lap of luxury until it's time to go back to Israel. What did he find? A widow who was gathering sticks so that she could make a miserable little fire for a handful of meal in a barrel and a weedrop of oil to make of it one last cake of bread.

She and her orphan son could share their last meal and then have nothing else to eat and then we're going to die. Elijah goes to and says make me some of it first.

And you might think well James how greedy can you get, you know sure this is our last meal, surely you don't want to invade this but this is a test of faith you see. This is effectively being brought to us to what doesn't matter whether we break it into two bits or three bits. We're going to die anyway. So yes, okay, take it.

The Lord gives not vast amounts of reserves He will give you what you need. If you need just so much to do just a certain thing that's what He'll give you. If you find you've got a little bit spare left over you'll probably find you were going to need that spare and it ends up being used a little bit further down the line.

God doesn't make a mistake. He's incredibly precise. This last drop of faith, this last ounce of energy or strength you may well not possess but if the Lord requires it of you I guarantee it. He will give it.

[23 : 58] It comes from the last final drop of faith and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God and it may amount to no more than an acknowledgement of the fact that God has brought you so low that you have nothing more to gain by opposing Him and nothing whatsoever left to lose.

You might as well just obey. The Lord's people are great at making excuses and that's always been the case. You know, we go back to Exodus and we find there, you know, Moses, one of the champions of the Lord and there he is in chapter four of Exodus.

Moses answered, but behold they will not believe me or listen to my voice for they will say the Lord did not appear to you. And then Moses keeps on arguing with the Lord. Verse 10 of chapter four. But Moses said the Lord, oh my Lord, I'm not eloquent either in the past or since you've spoken to your servant, but I'm slow of speech and of tongue.

And the Lord said, who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute or deaf or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now therefore go and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.

Again, hundreds of years later in the time of the judges, we find Gideon, of course, who is given a commission by the Lord and reckons he's got no strength. Gideon says to the angel, judges six, verse 13, said, please, sir, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us?

[25 : 36] And where are all his wonderful deeds that our fathers recounted to us saying did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? But now the Lord has forsaken us and given us into the hand of Midian.

In other words, we are crushed. We have no strength left. And the Lord turned to him and said, go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian. Do not I send you.

If it is God who sends and God who requires, then you can be guaranteed it will be God who will provide. I have given you enough to do this, says the Lord. I may not have given you multitudes of reserves.

I may have not given you huge riches and wealth, but I've given you enough for what I ask of you. I never ask of people that which is beyond their resources to accomplish. You do have it. You do have the means. You do have the strength.

You do have the faith because I have given you it. You do have enough if you will do, as I say.

Think of that incident, the beginning of the New Testament in Luke's account of the Gospel.

[26 : 52] After Jesus has been speaking to the people at the seashore of Galilee, when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch. And Simon answered, Master, we toiled all night and took nothing.

But at your word, I will let down the nets. Oh, look what happens next. We know what happens next. And we know why. Yes, he's toiled all night. Yes, he's taken nothing. He's not speaking untruthfully. He's an experienced fisherman. He knows there's nothing logically, humanly speaking. There is nothing going to bring more fish up now when they've toiled all night, except that Jesus says, go and do as I've asked. He says, well, Lord, well, go and do it.

If you say so. That's the will that is conformed to the Lord's will. And look what happens. The prayer of the crushed will be the hardest prayer they have ever prayed.

Addressed to the one they feel has turned against them and broken them. But at least the warfare is over. It is a prayer from which they anticipate no gain for themselves.

[28 : 13] Job's prayer was not on his own behalf, but for the sparing and acceptance by God of his erstwhile turn enters. 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. Notice that despite being the ones prayed for, when Job prays for his three friends, of course we must assume the Lord does as he said he would, turns away his wrath from them.

The focus is not on Eliphaz and Bill Darden so far, but on Job. The prayer of the crushed, the final ultimate act of self emptying with the last ounce of strength and faith one possesses, the final dying to self is the gateway not only to peace with God, but to untold blessing and enrichment. Remember what we read towards the end.

The Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. Then came to him all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before and ate bread with him in his house and they showed him sympathy and comforted him for all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him.

He had 6,000 camels and 1,000 yoke oxen and 1,000 female donkeys and also seven sons and three daughters and so on. It might think that hard, could you not have done that a wee bit sooner?

[29 : 55] Would it not have been nice if that had just happened when Job was in the middle of all his misery, couldn't you just have encouraged him a wee bit, but that was not God's time. Even although that was always God's intention, but before he died, God blessed them even more.

Despite being the ones prayed for, the focus is not on Job's three friends, it is on Job. The prayer of the cross, this self emptying, this dying to self, this is the untold blessing and enrichment released. But also, as we said before he died, God inspired Job to commit to writing the record of his experience of the fiery furnace of his affliction of God's own greatness and mercy and of Job's own surrender and eventual blessing.

Because it must have been written down before he died, otherwise who was able to recount it? That makes it older than the books of Moses. It makes it the oldest written book of the Bible. It makes it

perhaps the oldest book ever written in the world.

This is the means of declaring not only Job's sufferings, but God's own greatness and mercy and Job's own surrender and Job's eventual blessing.

[31 : 33] Psalm 102, we read it verse 17, he will regard the prayer of the destitute and not despise their prayer. I know that the Lord will have delighted in the blessing and enriching of Job at the end of this book, as a father loves to indulge and give gifts to his beloved children. The Lord delights to bless and to give us for our good and for our joy all that we could desire, but everything that God gives us over the course of our lives, He does so that we may be brought nearer to Him. And that is so, even when He gives affliction and pain.

In God's providence and mercy, it too has a purpose. With the Lord, nothing is for nothing. Is it not wonderful that hundreds of years before the writing down of the law, before Moses and the exodus from Egypt, before Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the Lord caused this most ancient of books to be written to record for posterity the necessary sufferings of the good and the upright, and to testify to how swiftly, at the last, shall be answered, and how richly and abundantly above all that they could ask or think shall the answers be given to the prayer of the Christ.

Let us pray. Our loving and gracious God, we are so thankful that Thou art in sovereign control of our lives, because, Lord, quite often things happen to us that we don't understand, and sometimes they seem to come raining down, blow after blow, after blow upon us. But no matter how much we suffer, we can always look around and see others who suffer even more, and we wonder why it should be for them, and we wonder why it should be for us, and particularly if we are trying to live for Thee and to be as good and right and faithful as we can be, and trying to honour Thee, Lord, we don't understand always why it is that Thou just dies sometimes so fiercely, those whom Thou lovest. But we know that not only with God all things are possible, but with God all things have a purpose, and that sometimes there may be something that we have yet to surrender, something we may have yet to let go, perhaps some surrender we have still to make, or some pride that we didn't even know was lingering there.

Lord Thou lovest us within and without, help us to just surrender completely to Thee, even if only from a point of view of self interest, because the sooner we submit and surrender to Thee, we know the sooner true blessing will start.

Help us then to be able to see that with God nothing is wasted. Everything has a purpose. As the psalmist said, put Thou my tears into Thy bottle, are they not in Thy book?

[35 : 23] So Lord, we just pray that tonight as we think about the Lord Jesus Christ, and all that He who was so innocent suffered and endured and was crushed and broken and put to death, for sin that He hadn't committed, but which He still bore upon the cross for sinners.

So we think about Him, help us Lord also to recognize that perhaps amongst us tonight there may be those who are themselves crushed and feeling broken, and don't understand why.

And we know that nothing that we've said tonight Lord will plumb the depths of that sorrow or that understanding. But we know that Thou art able to, and that Thou art able to meet them where they are and to deal graciously and tenderly with them.

So that's what we pray tonight Lord that whosoever may be crushed would yet soon come to be restored. And Thou would enable their complete surrender to Thee, and each of ours afresh tonight to surrender completely to Thee, that we may be built back up again, that we may pray for one another, and that we may be restored and blessed of Thee.

And then when the blessings of this world follow we will know that good as they are they are so much less than the blessings of eternity from the God of all grace.

[36 : 51] So continue with us now we pray and forgive our sin for Jesus' sake. Amen.