

Job 22: 1 – 23: 17; “When He Has Tested Me”, Sermon # 32 in the series – “Remember to Magnify His Work”, delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on June 18th, 2023, in the Afternoon Worship Service.

In this message I would like to speak to you about Job’s statement in verse 10 – “But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.” I want to focus on chapter 23, verses 8-12 primarily. I want to speak to you about how you as a Christian can be tested and come forth as gold. Let me give you 3 observations that I believe will be of great help to you.

1st of all – You can be tested and come forth as gold if you will realize that God knows the way that you take. (verses 8-10)

It is evident from all that Eliphaz said in chapter 22 that he did not understand the way that Job had taken. Sometimes other brothers and sisters in Christ do not understand the trial you are going through. Eliphaz responded to Job’s declaration of his integrity by saying – “Can a man be profitable to God, though he who is wise may be profitable to himself?” He says – “Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that you are righteous?” “Or is it any gain to Him that you make your ways blameless? These are very provoking statements indeed! Does God save men to think of them as useless to Himself?”

In verse 4 Eliphaz asks Job – Is it because of your fear of God that He corrects you, and enters into judgment with you? Is not your wickedness great, Job, and your iniquity without end? What horrible conclusions he draws concerning Job. Actually, it was just the very opposite of what Eliphaz was saying. Job was a man who feared God and was turning away from evil. And actually Eliphaz, unbeknownst to himself, had taken the part of the devil, to accuse Job falsely of things that he was not guilty of at all. He goes all the way through chapter 22 exhorting Job to repent of his sins. He was telling him that if he repented, then he would be delivered from his great trial.

This leads me to say that we must be very careful, my brethren, not to misapply the truth of God’s word to our brothers who are going through great trials. Job was going through this trial because God would permanently and forever establish Job’s moral integrity in the sight of men and angels. “Look I go forward, but He is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive Him; when He works on the left hand, I cannot behold Him; when He turns to the right hand, I cannot see Him.” “But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.”

I hope that you will understand that according to the Bible, the life that you live as a Christian is a life of faith.

By this I mean, that you do not see God, as of yet, face to face. In this great trial that Job was going through, He could not see God. He could not find God.

He could not perceive what God was doing. He could not, during most of the period of this trial, feel God’s presence. He could not even understand how he could find him, and present his case, of his being righteous to Him. But you will notice that Job did not leave off trying to find God. He continued believing in God during his trial.

This is living by faith. He was living by faith, even though at times, he said some things about God which were not correct.

He would confess that to God later. And the things that he said, we know, showed that he had some very important things to learn, spiritually speaking. One of the most important things that he was learning practically was that God knew the way that he took. Job did say this. But He had more to learn about it. There are sometimes things that God wants us to learn, that we have not really learned yet. Even though you may know many things theologically, or even experientially, already, there is still more to learn. An important part of your learning how to pass the testing of your faith is to recognize that God knows what your deepest thoughts and motivations are, for what you are doing.

Sometimes you may not really know this, the way that you should. Let me ask you whether you recognize that God is this close to you at all times, when you know Him personally? He knows everything about you perfectly, and He would have you to learn His ways. Now, you may even acknowledge that God knows everything about you at all times. You may say that no matter who a

person is, whether they are a believer, or whether they are an unbeliever, you believe that God knows everything about them. But do you really realize just how close God is to you, when you believe in Christ? God is always with you by His Spirit's living in your mind and heart. He is continually committed to doing you good according to the New Covenant in Christ. Jeremiah 32: 40 – “And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so they will not depart from Me.”

Now, even though this verse is set in the immediate context of the future conversion of the Jews, it has application to all believers in every generation of the world who trust in the promise of Christ. And so each and every believer benefits from this promise. Sometimes in the life of any believer they may wrongly draw the conclusion that God is not watching over them for their good. That, somehow, even during their greatest trial, that God has become their enemy. This is not true at all. But in your experience you may be tempted to draw this false conclusion, because you do not feel God's presence and His blessing coming to you in any real sense.

Job says in verse 3 – “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come to His seat!” “I would present my case before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments.” “I would know the words which He would answer me, and understand what He would say to me.” “Would He contend with me in His great power?” “No!” “But He would take note of me.” “There the upright could reason with Him, and I would be delivered forever from my Judge.” What Job failed to realize at this point in his trial, and what we may fail to realize in our trial, was just how very dear he was to God. He was a justified man, and by faith he had been declared righteous before God when he first believed, even as all believers are.

God had loved Job with an everlasting love, and with lovingkindness He had drawn him to Himself. Job had known the Lord for many years. The Lord had never left Him, nor forsaken Him at any point. And yet, during the time of his trial, it seemed to him that God was acting only as his Judge. And his friend Eliphaz was saying in verse 21 of chapter 22 – “Now acquaint yourself with God, and be at peace; thereby good will come to you.” And verse 23 – “If you return to the Almighty, you will be built up; you will remove iniquity far from your tents.” But Job did know God very well, he thought, before this trial. And now it seemed to him as though God was treating him as a wicked man.

Beloved, let us understand the strength of the spiritual battle which is set before us. We will, at times, be attacked by Satan. And his attacks will come in the form of misrepresenting our character before God, and to other believers as well. Each of us who believes in Jesus Christ will be tested as regards our faith. We may be attacked by Satan in this same way that Job was. But during that time, you should realize that God is not judging you to cast you off. But rather He is going to establish you in your integrity by the grace of Christ. Christ's righteousness and His sufferings will be triumphant in removing all of your sins.

His grace will be greater than all your sins, and even greater than all your righteousness. God will see you in Christ. This establishing of you, and confirming you as being one of His saints, it always takes place in relation to Jesus Christ and His righteousness, and His sufferings on your behalf.

2nd – You can be tested and come forth as gold if you do not depart from the commandment of His lips. (verses 11 & 12a)

Verse 11 says – “My foot has held fast to His steps; I have kept His way and not turned aside.” “I have not departed from the commandment of His lips...” This is the main point of what Job is saying in defense of himself in this whole book. It is that his foot has held fast to God's steps. An interesting phrase this is. Because it shows us that he was following God closely. He had become an imitator of God in all the things that he did in his own righteousness. Where he saw God was holy, he strove to be holy. Where he saw God was kind, he strove to be kind. He kept to the path of righteousness and had not turned aside. He had not departed from the commandments of God which were so real to him, and of such great force with him, that he saw them as coming to him from God's own lips.

This is what you and I are called to do as Christians in relation to God and in relation to other people around us. Ephesians 5: 1 says – “Therefore, be imitators of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ has also loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling

aroma.” You can see here that in order to be a faithful imitator of God, you must remember that through Christ’s offering, that you are His dear child. Since you are dear to him, you must learn to walk in love towards other people around you. The way to do that is to remember Christ’s dying love and sacrifice to God on your behalf. Christ’s love and sacrifice are remembered by God as a sweet-smelling aroma, it says here.

He really thought about us personally, and deeply, and intimately, as to what He needed to do to rescue us and redeem us from all of our iniquities. He would not at all participate in any of our sins, but He would rather bear them in His body on the tree. This was so that we would be forgiven of all of our sins. Yes, it is true. And what a great work it was, in His sufferings on the cross. All and every one of our sins is forgiven because He endured the cross and despised the shame. But His being perfectly righteous as a sacrifice unto God was also so that we might become like Him. We become like Him, when we by His powerful grace, follow in His steps. We become like Him when we learn from Him the kind of love that would enable us to become imitators of God as dear children.

This is why Job could say that his foot has held fast to God’s steps. God’s steps are best seen by us in the life and death of Christ. Job had not departed from the commandment of God’s lips because he held fast to the promise of Christ His Redeemer. I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.” “How my heart yearns within me!” Let me ask – Does your heart yearn for the day when you shall see Christ? Your yearning for Christ is not only to see Him then. It is also a yearning to behold Him at work in your life now, by His grace, changing you into His own blessed image. This is what it means to come forth as gold.

In Romans chapter 13, verse 8, Paul says that we are to – “Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.” “For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ ‘You shall not covet, and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” “Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.” How do we come to have this love shining forth as gold in our life and in our actions? Well, let us come to the table, and I will speak more to you about this.

3rd – You can be tested and come forth as gold if you will treasure the words of His mouth more than your necessary food.

Verse 12 says – “I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.” This is really quite a statement. Most of us are used to eating 3 meals a day. And we see this as very necessary to our physical life and strength. But do we consider, as Job did, that treasuring the words of God’s mouth is more important even, than our necessary food? Will you not remember that our Lord Jesus, in order to procure our salvation, fasted 40 days and 40 nights before he overcame the devil’s temptations to Him at that time? People fast in a righteous way, in order to afflict their soul, so that they will consider the importance of spiritual things. They fast because they want to have the power to overcome the evil one.

The devil, as the tempter, said to Jesus in Matthew 4: 3 – “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become bread.” But Jesus said to him – “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” He considered the words of God’s mouth as more important than his necessary food. You who want to become more like Him, you will learn to do the same when faced with temptations. You will treasure the words of God’s mouth, the words of the Bible, to be more important to you than your necessary food.

John 6: 57 – “As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will love because of Me.” “This is the bread which came down from heaven – not as your fathers ate the manna and are dead.” “He who eats this bread will live forever.” You will recall that the response of many people who claimed to be Jesus’ disciples was – “This is a hard saying; who can understand it?” And they stumbled over it. They followed Jesus when He fed them with the physical bread that He had multiplied. But they stopped following Him when He spoke to them about following Him in terms of

receiving His hard sayings. How can you and I learn to love God and other people with the love of Christ? How can we love with more than a human love?

The other day, Jenni was reading to me the amazing story of the love of Art Garfunkel for his friend Sandy Greenbury at the time they entered college at Columbia University. The article says – “They immediately bonded over their shared passion for literature and music. They became roommates and best friends. With the idealism of youth, they promised to be there for each other no matter what. Soon after starting college, Sandy was struck by tragedy. His vision became blurry and although doctors diagnosed it as temporary conjunctivitis, the problem grew worse. Finally after seeing a specialist, Sandy receive the devastating news that severe glaucoma was destroying his optic nerves. The young man with such a bright future would soon be completely blind.

Sandy was devastated and he fell into a deep depression. He gave up his dream of becoming a lawyer and moved back to Buffalo, where he worried about being a burden to his financially struggling family. Consumed with shame and fear, Sandy cut off contact with his old friends, refusing to answer letters or return phone calls. Then suddenly to Sandy’s shock, his buddy Art showed up at the front door. He was not going to allow his best friend to give up on life, so he bought a ticket and flew up to Buffalo unannounced. Art convinced Sandy to give college another go, and promised that he would be right his side to make sure that he didn’t fall – literally or figuratively.

Art kept his promise, faithfully escorting Sandy around campus and effectively serving as his eyes. It was important to Art that even though Sandy had been plunged into a world of darkness, he should never feel alone. Art actually started calling himself “Darkness” to demonstrate his empathy with his friend. He’d say things like – Darkness is going to read to you now. Art organized his life around helping Sandy. One day, Art was guiding Sandy through crowded grand Central Station when he suddenly said he had to go and left his friend alone and petrified. Sandy stumbled, bumped into people, and fell, cutting a gash in his shin. After a couple of difficult hours, Sandy finally got on the right subway train. After exiting the station at 116th St., Sandy bumped into someone who quickly apologized – and Sandy immediately recognized Art’s voice! It turned out his trusty friend had followed him the whole way home, making sure he was safe and giving him the priceless gift of independence.

Sandy later said – That moment was the spark that caused me to live a completely different life, without fear, without doubt. For that I am tremendously grateful to my friend. This is the little known story behind the song by Simon and Garfunkel – The Sounds of Silence. But it shows us some things that we ought to think about when we partake of this Supper. In seeing the love of Art Garfunkel for his friend Sandy, we see human love at its best. Art helped his friend who was in the darkness of blindness, by becoming his friend, one who would walk through the darkness with him. He even spoke to him in the personal terms of saying – Hello, it’s darkness your old friend. I’ve come to talk with you again. He was with him to help him in times of need.

But I want you to see that even though this is a very tender story of human love, that human love by itself cannot redeem you. You must have see and personally come to know the love of Christ. This is what we remember now in the Supper. Christ loved you when you when you were in your darkness and in our blindness. He leads you and guides you through this life as you trust Him. Indeed, He follows you all the way through your greatest trials and testings. And He faithfully watches over you in them so that you will learn from Him, the right way to think and live in every situation. He will make sure that you are safe spiritually, and He has given you the priceless gift of freedom from the guilt and power of sin by His death and resurrection on your behalf.

Ultimately, when God tests you, He does so in relation to Christ. And if you can understand the Father in this way, as always loving you in Christ, you will learn to love others with His love. That is the test, which if you pass it, the Lord will cause you to come forth as gold. You will pass the test by loving God, and loving Christ, and loving others. You do this, not by trusting in your own righteousness, but His. He is the One who has suffered for you so that He can bring you forth as gold in all of your trials, as you become faithful to Him.