



"The Integrity that Holds"

Job 2:1 - 13 - September 13, 2020

Please join me in the book of Job Chapter 2. Job is an Old Testament book found just before the Psalms. It tells the story of the unbearable pain and suffering that a very godly man experienced.

This story has been recorded and preserved for us in Scripture, not only to help us cope with the times of suffering that we experience in this life, but also to add astonishing perspective, helping us to preserve as those who continue to worship the Living God, whatever comes. This is the work of God in us, and this book helps us to walk in obedience to that work of God in us.

This morning's message is titled *The Integrity that Holds*. As we orient ourselves for this passage of Scripture, I want to start with a little bit of arithmetic. It is at this very basic level of mathematics that we learn that there are integers and fractions.

What are integers? Integers are whole numbers. What are fractions? Fractions are numbers divided up. A person of integrity is like an integer. He or she is not all divided up into pieces. The character of this person's life is not fractioned up so that they are one person in one environment and seemingly an entirely different person in another setting. Rather, there is consistency of character.

So with a man of integrity, the man that he is at church is the man that he is at home. The man that he is at work is also the man that he is at play. A sister in Christ in a bible study group is the same woman that she is at the office. There is integrity and consistency of character in the different settings of life.

However, this morning as we get into the book of Job, the issue of integrity in the faith is carried even further. Not only do we have the same character in the different sectors of life, but we have the same character in the different circumstances and seasons of life.

When God is filling their lives, a Christian, by the grace of God, is resolved to be the same person. They are also a person who is going to worship the Lord in poverty and in plenty and in plenty and in poverty.

They are going to walk by faith and praise the Name of the Lord in times of sickness and in health and in times of health and in times of sickness. They are going to walk with the Lord, trusting in Him for better or for worse, for worse and for better. There is integrity and consistency and sameness throughout the different circumstances of life.

Here in the book of Job, we see the integrity of a godly man being put to the test. The question is: will he remain true to the Lord even under the most furious attack? Will he continue to praise the Lord when hard times come in the same way that he did when there was tremendous blessing and wealth in his life? When all the good things are stripped away, will he continue to worship the Lord because the Lord is worthy to be praised?

Last week we were stunned to read of Satan's attack. He was mocking the very possibility of authentic, genuine faith. Satan asserted that the people of God worship God only because of the earthly benefits they get out of it. If you take away the good and enjoyable things of life, the truth will come out as people then begin to curse the very God that they had previously praised.

So Satan made the case that authentic worship is a sham. It is not real. It does not exist. That was Satan's take. So he approached God and said, Of course, Job worships you. Look at his lavish life. Look at all of his wealth. Look at his thriving family. Who wouldn't he worship you? You have a hedge of protection all around Job, but if you let me afflict him, he will curse you to your face. You just watch!

And this test was allowed. Anyone who was really paying attention last week sat astounded and grieved as an avalanche of suffering was released upon Job. His wealth was destroyed. He lost each of his ten children. They were taken as the house collapsed upon them when they were gathered together.

Then the big question that came from the text is: will Job then curse God to His face? Instead, Job did the exact opposite. There was a confession of faith from a man cast down to the ground. Job responded: The Lord has given. The Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

So Job's integrity remained intact. Through all those years where good things were flowing into his life, Job came to know something of the character of the Lord. That remained intact. Even when those good things were painfully taken away, Job continued to praise the Lord. His spiritual integrity was maintained, praising God in the happy times and praising God in the painful times.

Now as we move forward, the question is: will Satan be satisfied with the outcome? Will the accuser concede? Will he dismiss the case and say, I was wrong. Or will Satan continue to find fault? This morning we will see what came next. As we do, we will see the kind of spiritual warfare that takes place in this world as Satan and the demons still seek to afflict and test the authenticity of the people of God.

This morning we will see God's Word coming to us in three parts. I was hoping for four parts, but we are only going to get through three. We will take the fourth point next time. Once again, we will see a stunning scene in Heaven. Then we will see a loathsome affliction on the earth. Finally, we will see a faithful response to a spouse. All these issues comprise the testing of Job and the integrity of his faith.

First, we see:

1. A Stunning Scene in Heaven (2:1-6)

This is the same exact caption that we used for point one last week. This scene is very, very similar to what we saw in Chapter 1 last week. However, it is a little bit different. Let's see how this unfolds. Job Chapter 2 and Verse 1:

¹Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD. ²And the LORD said to Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." ³And 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, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason." ⁴Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. ⁵But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face." ⁶And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life."

Was Satan willing to acknowledge Job's faith and tip his hat to the integrity that he displayed in the previous scene? No, he was not! Satan said, NO, it was a faulty test. It was only a partial examination. We did not take the test as far as it needed to go, so the integrity of Job's faith remains suspect.

That is what Satan was getting at in this passage. What haunting words he used to cast doubt upon Job's faith. Satan said, Skin for skin. The point is that Job was willing that the flesh of his children be destroyed because he got to keep his own life. After all, as Satan said, all that man has, he will give for his life. Job escaped with his health and life and knew he could rebuild, so he returned praise.

That is what Satan was saying here, so Satan issued another challenge. Strike his body. Touch his bone. Touch his flesh. Let his suffering go deep and then you watch as he curses you to your face. That is the issue that Satan challenged.

As we look at what is written here, brothers and sisters, we need to stop and recognize what a serious trial and test of faith it is when our bodies are afflicted. Our souls were designed to be clothed with bodies—so when these bodies become wounded or contract something that is terminal, even a chronic weakness that endures on and on and on and you can't seem to shake it—it affects everything, sending tremors into the soul.

It is a severe test when followers of Jesus Christ are afflicted with different ailments. So, brothers and sisters, we need to be praying for one another in the midst of physical painful times that people in our church family experience, because there is a test of the integrity of faith that is taking place.

Every now and then, I will hear from somebody, All we ever do is share with each other prayer requests about how we are sick. Why don't we get to the struggles with sin. Why don't we talk about the emotional and relational struggles.

Amen to that, let's confess to one another where we struggle with sin and let's pray for the emotional and relational struggles, but let us understand what a severe trial it is when our bodies are afflicted. It can shake us to the core.

It is a time of testing when the authenticity of the new creation will rise forth as we are carried by the power of God. We need to be aware of and pray for brothers and sisters in Christ who are experiencing pain and difficulties in their bodies. It is serious!

When we have this language of touch to the bone, how can we not recall that there is a beloved sister in our church where cancer has reached the bone? And what a glorious display it is when through such times, faith rises up praising God still. We are praying for Irene who has bone cancer. We are praying for Sallie who also has cancer.

We have a young woman in our church who experiences chronic and ongoing dizziness, and we are praying for her as well. It is debilitating. It is something that Suzanne is suffering under, and it is a test. And we need to be praying for one another in the midst of these times. This is spiritual warfare.

There is a brother in our midst who is experiencing kidney failure. Thinking about that, we can also lose sight of the fact that he also has ongoing Chron's disease. We need to be praying for Roger.

There are so many examples. We can go on and on. People are going through painful and difficult things; afflictions to the lungs; afflictions to the GI system. There are so many things that are serious. We see in this text that it is serious. We must be praying for one another in the middle of such trials of life.

We continue and we see that Satan was allowed to afflict Job's health. What comes next? The testing of Job's faith included:

2. A Loathsome Affliction on Earth (2:7-8)

Let's look at what it says in Verses 7 and 8:

⁷So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. ⁸And he took a piece of broken pottery with which to scrape himself while he sat in the ashes.

I read this and I am reminded once again, like we considered last week, what an opportunist and strategist Satan is. He is very careful. He has dark wisdom in the timing of his attacks. We saw last week that Satan was patient and waited for the time when all of Job's children were gathered together in the home of the first born son. Then Satan caused the whirlwind to come across the land and strike the foundation of that house.

Satan has patience. He calculated it for the most painful affect. However, in this scene, it seems much more immediate. Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and struck Job very quickly, just like that, with loathsome sores from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head.

Satan knew that Job was in a weakened state. Here we have Job at the bottom of the dogpile of adversity. Calamity after calamity after calamity had come upon Job's life. 7,000 sheep destroyed. The camels, donkeys, the oxen were stolen. The servants, the employees that Job cared for, were murdered. His ten children dead, each one being devastating in its own right, bearing down on Job.

There he was under the weight of all of this pain and difficulty. Then, suddenly, sores began breaking out all over his body. Loathsome sores, it says. They afflicted him, not simply from head to toe, but from crown to sole, from the top of his shaved head to the bottom of his feet.

What we find throughout the book of Job is that as time progressed, his sickness afflicted his entire system. Some commentators try to discern exactly which disease it was Job was stricken with. We can guess all we want, but it is simply not identified. However, the symptoms of this disease are found all throughout the book of Job. It was serious.

Jobs condition included:

- Sores that scabbed over, cracked, oozed fluid and got infected with worms (Job 7:5)
- Severe sore throat that was so serious that he could barely swallow (Job 7:19)
- Insomnia and restless throughout the night, along with delirium (Job 7:4, 13-14)
- Swelling on the face and around the eyes, he was all puffed up and red with weeping. (Job 16:16)
- Bad breath and extreme body odor (Job 19:17)
- Emaciation, as he could not eat (Job 19:20)
- Fever with chills. He was shaking and burning up (Job 21:6, 30:30)
- Darkening and shriveling of his skin (Job 30:30)
- Diarrhea. His GI system was afflicted (Job 30:27)
- Excruciating pain throughout his body (Job 30:17)

All of this came together and the big question is: had Job reached his breaking point. Had Job reached the point where he had experienced such difficulty that, even despite the good things that had filled his life previously, he would shake his fist at God and curse the Name of God and denounced his faith in God? Was that going to happen next? We see that astonishingly someone kind of pushed him in that direction

We continue and see:

3. A Faithful Response to a (Grieving) Spouse (2:9-10)

Now we have the sudden appearance, seemingly out of nowhere, as Job's wife appeared. She spoke into the situation, nudging Job in the wrong direction. But, even still, we see this amazing display of the integrity of Job's faith, even as he was pushed to the brink. Verses 9 and 10:

⁹Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die.” ¹⁰But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?” In this Job did not sin with his lips.

There is a lot of interest and a lot of intrigue and a lot of discussion about Job’s wife and where she was coming from when she said these things to him. The fact of the matter is, textually speaking, what happened here is not good. Job’s wife was not helping him.

Looking at the details of the text, what we have read here in Chapter 2, God had spoken of Job’s integrity as something that was of great value; something commendable; something that He was pointing too. And Job’s wife seemed to view it as fanaticism—do you still hold fast to your integrity? It seemed to come with an accusatory tone.

In addition to that, Satan said, Touch his bone and his flesh and he will curse You to Your face. Now Job’s nearest and dearest said, Curse God and die. Speaking out of the marital bond, she exhorted Job toward blasphemy. Would Job blow up? It is amazing because her question cast doubt upon the sensibility of what God commended, and her advice pushed Job in the very direction that Satan was prompting.

What was happening with Job’s wife? I pray that we look upon this picture very, very sympathetically. We see that she was seething. We see that she was deeply wounded and upset. But as I see what she released verbally, what I discern in the text is that this was something that was out of character for her. In the midst of all the upheaval of her life, she was releasing something that was not consistent with her previous walk. It was something different in the intensity of it all.

Last week I had my forty-seventh birthday. I was talking with Dad and Lance. We were sharing a meal together. We began talking about the labor and delivery ward at Memorial Hospital back on August 31, 1973. I was asking what the experience was like on my day of birth. I was thinking back on some of the things that Dad said and recalling the fact that I was born breech. That means that when I was born, I did not come out head first. Rather, I came out with my bottom side out. I came out folded with my buttock first. That was painful for Mom. Painful! It was very hard for her. If I have the story, Dad was by Mom’s side seeking to help her in her labor, and she began biting him! Biting his arm. Biting him in the midst of the pain that she was experiencing.

Brothers and sisters, I fairly certain that my mom was not in the ongoing regular practice of biting my dad. It was something that was born out of extraordinary pain that she was experiencing.

And here we have Job’s wife. Let me ask you Moms this: what is more painful? Delivering a child or seeing that child die before your eyes? My sense of Job’s wife is that she was a woman overwhelmed, worn down, emotionally rubbed raw by the recent events and turns of her life. She was a woman in pain.

We think the year 2020 is bad. And the year 2020 has been bad. I don't want to minimize how bad it has been, but look at what Job's wife experienced within the course of a couple of days. Job's wife, she might come to us and say, Give me your 2020. I will take it! I will eat your 2020 for breakfast!

All of the security of her estate had been stripped away. Ten incurable wounds had bruised her soul, and the pain was fresh. These wounds, one for each of her beloved children, would unlikely heal in her lifetime completely. Life had been kicking her relentlessly in the head. She was confused and anguished and bewildered and grieved and angry and she was even angry at God. And she released all this verbally in a rash way. This was what was happening.

I have a sympathetic view of Job's wife. My heart goes out to her. I don't want to be among those who villainize her. Really contemplating these things deeply this past week, I have found myself becoming very, very impatient with all the snide, glib little remarks that I have heard about Job's wife.

“Ha, ha, ah, guys, how would you like to have a gem like her?” Just shut up and don't say that kind of thing in the face of suffering like that! That's not appropriate. That's not how believers act. This is serious.

At the same time, this is a very, very dark moment. At the same time, Satan was millimeters away from having his way. At the same time, it would seem like it was on the brink of disaster as, perhaps, Job would be moved in such a way that he would say, God, I am done with You. I deny You. I am walking away from You for the remainder of my life.

What happened next? Once again, what we see coming forth from Job in the midst of this excruciating spiritual warfare, is just a model of astonishing faith under trial. What we see from Job here is a man seeking to redeem his beloved in the midst of the pain that she was experiencing there by his side.

As I advised a couple of weeks ago, I wonder how many of you have read Chapters 29 through 31 in the book of Job. This is where we read more detail about his character. What we find there and throughout the book of Job is that he was a man who had compassion. He was a man who had sympathy. He was a man who had eyes for the suffering.

Job was a gracious man, as God was forming this kind of faith in him; as God was shaping him with this kind of character. When Job responded to his wife, he did not sin with his lips. It was not some kind of outburst against her. What we see is that this man was seeking to minister to his beloved, and it is a beautiful display.

This consisted of two parts. We see in Job Chapter 2 that first Job made a statement, then he asked a question in Verse 10. In Verse 10, Job said:

¹⁰But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women would speak.

Understand, he did not say, What kind of fool are you behaving like? You fool. What are you saying to me? It was not a harsh word. That is not what was happening. Rather, Job was saying, You are speaking out of character. You are speaking as one of the foolish women would speak.

In the pages of Scripture, understand that foolishness and atheism are pretty much synonymous. I am not being cheeky! In the Psalms, The fool says in his heart, there is no God. So Job was telling his wife that she was talking like an atheist. You are talking as though the Living God, who has been so abundantly good to us, does not exist. That is how those women talk, not like I know you to be.

Second, notice how Job pursued their unity as a couple. Job did not say to his wife, Foolish, foolish woman! Shall I receive from God the good and not the moral evil but the circumstantial pain and hardship that we are in? Shall I receive good from God and not the bad?

Job did not say, Should I. Should I. Should I. Rather, Job said, Should we. Should we receive from God profound and astonishing blessings that we have experience throughout our lives and not times of trouble too.

Job was seeking to pull his wife in, taking his wife close to his heart. Job seeming to have the perception that in the end, this world is not a playground, but that it is a battleground. So we see that Job did not sin in his speech, and the integrity of his faith continued on and on and on.

I read this and I am amazed at the faith that was evident in Job. I look at what was happening in Job and see that this world is a battleground. I see what is possible when the hand of God and His Spirit is upon a person, prompting them toward faith, and they respond in obedience. Looking at Job is awesome! What a picture we see.

That is something that we need to aspire to. In view of the fact that we are receiving a Kingdom that has eternal splendor and joy and love, we need to be willing to experience seasons of suffering in this world, that the glory of God might be displayed in us; that it might put on display that our God is of such substance that we don't praise Him for the things on this earth that we get from Him, but we praise Him for who He is.

We look at Job and it is an awesome display of that kind of faith. But I wonder how many of you, like me, at the same time aspiring to be like Job, can identify more with Job's wife! I hope you won't think too much less of your pastor when I say that there have been times in my life when I have resembled Job's wife much more than I have resembled Job.

I can remember a couple years ago sitting in the Jetta in my driveway when it was time to go to church. It was a midweek day and it was time to go and get some pastoral ministry done. It was a season where the hardships and the difficulties were so diverse and were collecting and bearing down and bearing and bearing down on me.

It erupted in an outburst of anger toward God there in the Jetta right next to our house. I remember spilling whatever I had in my hand, asking God, Why have you brought me into this pastoral life. I stink at it! I was so very upset. I remember pulling out of the driveway and driving up Studebaker Road and kicking my foot on the gas pedal. Something was seething in me.

Now before you get too alarmed, understand this, pretty much every pastor that I know who is seasoned in the ministry, who has been at it for a decade or two, has had similar experiences. So, there are times in life where things bear down and it is hard and our souls are rubbed raw.

I look at this story and see this picture of Job, and see what is possible. This is not Job in his own resources. We must take the full doctrine of Scripture into account, and understand that the Spirit of God was moving upon Job prompting this, and he was so astonishingly obedient.

There also are times when we get rubbed down and frustrated. In these times, we must remember that in Job we are pointed to the One who truly is the Hero of Scripture. When we get into the pages ahead in the book of Job, while Job did not go as far as blasphemy and abandoning his faith and cursing God and walking away from it, he got fried too!

How does Job 3 and Verse 1 begin?

¹After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth.

Job got rubbed down and made raw too. In these displays of obedience early in Job, we are reminded of the One that all of Scripture ultimately points us to. Job experienced extreme pain in his life. Let's remember what we talked week and we finished up.

The book of Job is an extreme book. It paints a dramatic picture for us. It is a book of extremity. Job is an extreme story that points to an even more extreme story still. Very few people have suffered to the degree that Job did. Few are called to suffer in that way.

But our suffering pale's in comparison to Job's suffering, but Job's suffering pale's in comparison to the suffering of the One that he foreshadowed. Christ Jesus suffered in His body on the tree. Jesus did not just suffering the affliction of bodily health, He bore our sins in His body on the tree.

Jesus suffered the payment and the justice and the judgment and the wrath that sin and iniquity deserves. His suffering went so much deeper. His suffering ran so much more profoundly, so that we in Him we might be forgiven, that we might be delivered, and that we might be raised up in everlasting life, restored into new imperishable bodies that will last forever. We praise God for that!

Here in Job, there is such a picture of Christ, because Job in the midst of his affliction, sought to minister to the one who was fried and frustrated; the one who even brought words of contempt upon his ongoing faith.

And there on the cross as Jesus was suffering for our sin, there He was seeking to minister to those who were the ones that nailed Him there, Father, forgive them. They know not what they do. So we have Jesus, this ultimate example of mercy and grace, seeking to draw us back into the heart of God, even when we are nailing Him to the cross. It is a beautiful picture.

In a way that exceeds even Job's patience, Christ is patient with us, His beloved church, His beloved bride. He is with us. He is upholding us. He is strengthening us. He is sustaining us, so that we might have this integrity of faith that holds fast through the ups and downs, through the pain and the joys of life.

Jesus is seeking to uphold us and sustain us, and He is propping us up in the kind of faith that outlasts our outbursts, and we have our outbursts. Jesus is propping us up so that we can continue to declare the praise of Jesus to the dismay of the entire demonic world and to the glory of the Living God.

The integrity of our faith, the integrity of our faith, the integrity that holds is the integrity that must be held on to. We have a part in it. We must say, Lord, before I even go into these trials, please fill me by Your Spirit with a faith that endures through the thick and through thin, I look forward to your everlasting reign. The integrity that holds is an integrity that we must hold on to, telling the Lord that we want to walk by faith, even knowing that all along, it is God that is holding on to us.

This has been a heavy, heavy, heavy passage of Scripture. I hope that I have made things clear from it. But let's finish with some New Testament perspective, some teaching from the fullness of Scripture that reminds us that whatever we face in this world, the Lord has His hold on His people who are resting in Christ through faith.

As people were accusing Jesus, Jesus said in John Chapter 10 and Verses 37 through 30:

²⁷“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. ³⁰I and the Father are one.”

We can hold fast to the integrity of faith because Christ is holding on to us. He will hold us fast. Romans Chapter 8 and Verses 31 through 38. Read these things and understand that we live on a battlefield and pain and suffering are not abnormal for Christians.

³¹What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall

tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶As it is written,

**“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”**

³⁷**No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.**

³⁸**For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angles nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our LORD.**

That’s the kind of grip that Jesus has on us. Through the hard things that we will experience in time, He will uphold us through eternity. So let us cast ourselves on the mercy of the Savior. Let us cast ourselves upon Him for the power that He gives, that we might have endurance through the hard things that we will in fact face in this life.

May His grace fill us in such a way that we will respond in such faith that the demonic world would not be able to make sense of it. God will be glorified by it and the people close to us will be encouraged by seeing something distinct.

With this, let’s close in a world of prayer and ask the Lord to help us with the trials that lie ahead on our path, knowing that He will be with us every step of the way.