



“The Fire on the Ashes”

Job 32:1 – 37:24

November 8, 2020

We will turn our attention to the book of Job. This morning’s message is titled *The Fire on the Ashes*, and summarizes the content of Job Chapters 32 through 37.

As we prepare ourselves for what we have here in this text, I want to mention that on Wednesday morning of this week I woke up to the ongoing coverage of the 2020 Presidential election. I went to bed the night before with Trump in the lead, and woke up in the morning seeing Biden’s numbers surging.

Like everyone else, I have my own response to the things that I were taking in the news. With all this going on, something else that had absolutely nothing to do with the election appeared on my feed and what I read affected me more than anything else that is going on at the national level.

It is something that has gripped my heart more than all of the other things that are taking place in this land. There is a popular blogger, a Christian man who has a ministry in writing online, by the name of Tim Challies.

Tim has a blog that many of us have been following for close to a decade. He is a humble and gracious and genuine follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is doing wonderful ministry, writing theologically rich articles while also drawing our attention to some of the best and most thought provoking writings online all across the Reformed Evangelical landscape.

On Wednesday of this week, out of nowhere, Challies released this statement on his feed. It says:

“In all the years I’ve been writing I have never had to type words more difficult, more devastating than these: Yesterday the Lord called my son to himself—my dear son, my sweet son, my kind son, my godly son, my only son.”

You could feel the sorrow coming off of the screen, and many of us felt that sorrow with him. His son was at a table with friends at Voice College, a Christian college in Kentucky. They were playing board games together. He was with his fiancé and a handful of others. He collapsed, and he never regained consciousness. They still don’t know why this happened.

Reading this and looking at the pictures, my heart was heavy and I found myself actually shedding tears for a family that I have never even met before. However, we can sympathize and have the sense of the pain, even though what they are going through is absolutely unique to their situation. Your heart goes out to them.

For me, this was in fact a sobering reminder that we still live in the same world that our brother in the Lord, Job, lived in. It is a world in which godly men and women, godly boys and girls, people saved by grace, people who are by no means sinlessly perfect, but sinners saved by grace, given the Spirit and growing in holiness, following after the Lord, seeking to lead godly families—such people suffer profoundly in this fallen world that we live in.

There is suffering that is experienced among the people of God. So often, we are left with the question of why. Many of us suffer. We all suffer in different ways. Some of us will suffer with unexpected bereavement that fills our hearts with heaviness. Some of us will experience disease in the body. Some of us will experience the loss of home in foreclosure. Some of us will experience bankruptcy.

And before the Lord, we are left asking why is this happening. That is the question of the book of Job. As we have seen suffering and calamity fall upon Job's life, he was left asking the question why.

This morning we move into a new portion of the book of Job contained in Chapters 32 through 37. It is a new portion of the book of Job. Up to this point from Chapter 4 to Chapter 31, there has been an ongoing and extensive dialogue between Job and his three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar.

They had been discussing the meaning of suffering and in the end, the theory asserted by those three friends had been found to be insufficient. They had argued that suffering is basically punishment for sin, and prosperity is a reward for righteousness.

Therefore, according to their worldview, Job's extraordinary suffering could only be explained in terms of some extraordinary wickedness that was hidden in Job's life. Something that he was covering up.

Meanwhile, Job himself, he refused to submit to that. We know, along with Heaven, what was disclosed at the beginning of the book of Job. Now by no means was Job a man without sin but at the same time, he was a man redeemed by the grace of the Lord, growing in the ways of the Lord. Job was blameless. He was upright. He feared the Lord and he turned away from evil.

Job knew this as well, so he pushed back against his friends. In so doing, as we have seen, Job was protesting the theology of his day as he sought to explain to his friends that there is good evidence all over the world that actually there are wicked people who really do seem to prosper, and there are righteous people who suffer.

In his particular case, Job was not willing to bend and say that he was living some hidden life of rebellion that would set him up for the kind of suffering he experienced. So Job persisted and he held his ground and in the end, Eliphaz and Bildad and Zophar were not able to sustain their theory against Job's realism and integrity. Job would not bend.

As we saw in recent weeks, their arguments just kind of fizzled out. We also saw that there were three rounds of discussion and dialogue and debate. In the first two rounds, they came on strong. Job held his ground. Yet, in round three they fell apart.

Eliphaz, the supposed wise and most experienced and most learned of them all, he just restored to outright slander against Job. Then Bildad released a brief and exasperated rebuke that was only six verses long. Then Zophar did not even bother to attempt another word. He just said he was done.

So the conversations came to a close and Job was the last one speaking. You might say that Job won the argument. Job was the last man standing, but we were left with Job standing in a very uncomfortable place. By the time we get to the end of Chapter 31, we have Job still sour and embittered, even with an impure view of God.

Reading through this book, we know that Job knew that without a doubt there is a God who exists. Job knew that God is almighty, but what happened in Job's heart is that he started questioning the justice of God.

Job began asserting statement that would have God be understood as a capricious God, a whimsical arbitrary God, inflicting pain upon the people of the earth, even the godly. And Job was saying that even the godly are treated unfairly.

So throughout the book, Job was justifying himself to the point that he was casting aspersions upon his God. He even wanted a day in court. Job sent out a subpoena and he wanted to take God to court. He wanted to advance his cause, and he wanted God to give him an account.

The book of Job left off with Job outlasting his friends, but shaking his fists toward Heaven as he justified himself and challenged the Lord. Now we move forward and we see that there is a new element added to the story. A new character entered on to the scene.

He had been there among the spectators listening the whole time. This was a public occasion that was happening, and this man was very carefully taking in all that was said. Now he brought himself into the conversation.

He came in with much zeal and passion and even indignation. He was angered by how things had unfolded, and he came out white-hot, even with prophetic wisdom. He came onto the scene in front of all the learned men and told them that they were all wrong. He was mad at everybody.

He was not willing to affirm what Job's friends had been saying, as they had dismissed Job as a wicked man, and had concluded that all suffering was proof of wickedness in the lives of all those who suffer. He was not going to go for that. He had something else to say.

Meanwhile, he was mad at Job, asserting that Job had overstated his holiness and irreverently proclaimed the Living God to be unjust and unfair. This man proclaimed to Job, You don't know the mind of the Lord; the unsearchable wisdom of the Lord in what happened to you. That is his sense as you read through what is recorded in these chapters.

I must say this: Elihu was a very interested element in the story of Job. He kind of came in out of nowhere and he was perplexing to lots of people who read this book devotionally and who study it in detail.

I have been using six Bible commentaries on Job to guide my preparation and contemplation of these things for myself. Those commentaries, these evangelical conservative Christian authors, they are all across the spectrum in terms of how we are to understand Elihu. How do we view him?

There is so much difference of perspective when we approach this that the question comes: do we accept his counsel or not? Do we view him like the other three or not? What do we make of Elihu?

In my reading of the commentaries, in my listening to different sermons over these past months, seeking to swim in the book of Job, I have discerned that there are three perspective on Elihu among the authors that have read.

What do we make of Elihu? Here are three view on Elihu. I am not kidding, some people say that:

1. Elihu is a presentation of comic relief.

That is the perspective that some have and preach about Elihu. There had been so much tension and so much heaviness in the book of Job that Elihu was inserted as little bit of comic relief to break the tension.

It was all so heavy then all of a sudden, onto the scene came this over-confident, pig-headed, bombastic, blazing young man who was full of anger and thought he knew everything. People kind of laugh and say OK everybody, this is not how to be.

That is kind of the perspective that some bring with Elihu. I don't agree with that. Others come from another perspective. They say that:

2. Elihu is a proponent of Retribution Theology.

We have seen this theology throughout the book of Job. They would even view Elihu as an extension and even an intensification of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar because he came in with so much anger. If you listen to what he said, Elihu did say things that were similar to what the other three said.

Elihu was hard to understand at times. However, in my contemplation and attempts to understand this, I have discerned that while in some ways Elihu might sound similar to them, he did in fact bring another angle. He brought a new perspective and even if it seemed slight, it was actually huge in terms of the conclusions that it required. It was a game changer.

So I agree with those who see:

3. Elihu is a prophetic voice of divine wisdom.

That is how others view this young man, Elihu. We can kind of see him as a John the Baptist figure here in the book of Job, kind of preparing the way of the Lord. In Chapters 32 through 37, Elihu spoke and he had an unbroken preaching and proclamation that he brought to the ash heap.

Then after Elihu spoke, none of the others spoke. After Elihu proclaimed what he proclaimed, then the whirlwind came. It came in the voice of the Lord, thundering forth. So there is the view that Elihu kind of prepared the way for the voice of the Lord in the same way that later in Israel's history there were prophets like Elijah and Elisha. Similarly here in Job, we have Elihu and evidently his name means Yahweh is God.

What we see that is really important as we get to the final portion of the book is that the Lord will speak. There is your spoiler! The Lord came and the Lord spoke and the Lord Himself brought reproof upon Job, saying, Who is this who darkens counsel without wisdom? The Lord brought reproof to Job and Job repented in sackcloth and ashes.

Job got reproofed, but it was even worse for Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. They got severely rebuked to the point that the Lord told them to get a sacrifice and offer a burnt offering for the way they had sinned against Job.

The Lord came and brought truth into the situation. Job got reproofed. The other men received a more severe rebuke, but nothing is said about Elihu. That would seem to indicate that what he was saying brings us much closer to what we need to know about suffering in this world among those who follow the Lord.

I think all of this indicates that we must pay careful attention to this young man. Yes, he came off as boastful and assertive, but he had some important things to say. So let's take a look at a few highlights in the chapters that are ahead of us.

I want for us to notice how Elihu put himself forward for God; how he entered the conversation. Then we will notice how Elihu put his finger on a problem. Finally, we will notice how Elihu opened a door of understanding.

First, let's see how Elihu came on like a storm himself.

1. Elihu enters the conversation (32:1-22)

We see this in Chapter 32, starting in Verse 1:

¹So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes.
²Then Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, burned with anger. He burned with anger at Job because he justified himself rather than God.
³He burned with anger also at Job's three friends because they had found no answer, although they had declared Job to be in the wrong. ⁴Now Elihu had waited to speak to Job because they were older than he. ⁵And when Elihu saw that there was not answer in the mouth of these three men, he burned with anger.

This man was burning with anger. He brought the fire to the ash heap. It actually has been discovered by Ancestry.com that Elihu was a distant relative of Yosemite Sam. You can see that very clearly. Just jesting!

This is something that we might recognize as righteous indignation. Now Elihu began to speak. Verse 6:

⁶And Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered and said:

**"I am young in years,
and you are aged;
therefore I was timid and afraid
to declare my opinion to you.
⁷I said, 'Let days speak,
and many years teach wisdom.'
⁸But it is the spirit in man,
the breath of the Almighty, that makes him understand.
⁹It is not the old who are wise,
nor the aged who understand what is right.
¹⁰Therefore I say, 'Listen to me;
let me also declare my opinion.'
¹¹"Behold I waited for your words,
I listened for your wise sayings,
while you searched out what to say.
¹²I gave you my attention,
and, behold, there was none among you who refuted Job
or who answered his words.
¹³Beware lest you say, 'We have found wisdom;
God may vanquish him, not a man.'
¹⁴He has not directed his words against me
and I will not answer him with your speeches.**

Just in these opening verses we can get the sense of the kind of person that young Elihu was. We see that he sat there and waited. He was practicing patience. He was listening. He was weighing every word. He was taking everything in, and he was waiting respectfully for the wise sages to finish their arguments.

However, as he was listening and seeing it all unfold and seeing it coming to its conclusion, Elihu found great frustration rising up inside of him. He was angry. There is such a thing called righteous indignation and it is an anger that rises up for the honor of God. I think that is what we see Elihu as a specimen of.

Even in the New Testament in the book of Ephesians, it is said to the church, Be angry and do not sin. A little later it says, Get your anger under control of the Holy Spirit. Don't let the sun go down on your anger, because that produces resentment and it can be dangerous and it can give the Devil a foothold.

But anger is an emotion that is created in us. We saw that Jesus experienced anger. Sometimes we should get mad at things that we see in this world. Here we have Elihu and he was angry. I think as we look at what is here, there is so much that can be gleaned, so much wisdom that can be accrued from that initial chapter of Elihu.

However, what really stands out to me as I read this is that Elihu understood himself to be bringing a unique contribution to the ash heap, to the dialogue, to the debate. He was bringing something new.

In Verses 3 and 5, he discerned that in all of their winding speech, they found no answer. In Verse 10, he said that he has his own opinion, and evidentially his opinion was different from the others that he had heard. Then in Verse 14, Elihu said to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, Understand, I am not answering according to your speeches.

So Elihu understood himself to be bringing a different angle to the situation at hand, so we continue and we see what is here. It is important for us to take this in because there are things here that I think helps us also to be discerning in the midst of our suffering, and they also help us to make sense of God's work in the midst of our suffering as well.

Next we see how:

2. Elihu puts his finger on the problem (33:8-12)

I think it becomes evident in two places. One in Chapter 33 and then in another place in Chapter 34. This is what it says. Chapter 33 and Verse, now speaking, Elihu said to Job:

**⁸“Surely you have spoken in my ears,
and I have heard the sound of your words.
⁹You say, I am pure, without transgression;
I am clean, and there is not iniquity in me.
¹⁰Behold, he finds occasions against me,
he counts me as his enemy,
¹¹he puts my feet in the stocks
and watches all my paths.’
¹²Behold, in this you are not right. I will answer you,
for God is greater than man.**

Then similarly in Chapter 34 and Verse 5 and 6, Elihu summarized Job once again:

**⁵For Job has said, ‘I am in the right,
and God has taken away my right;
⁶in spite of my right I am counted a liar;
my wound is incurable, though I am without transgression.**

So here in what we have read, I think that Elihu was putting his finger on something, and he brought expression to something that many of us who read the book of Job have the sense of as we see Job’s intensity and vexation increase and increase and increase. You get the sense that Job overstated his cause, even as he spoke out against the Lord.

What we find is that Job was driven in the midst of his suffering to say things about himself that were overly optimistic and things about God that were disrespectful and brash. Repeatedly Job was saying, I am in the right. I am in the right. I am in the right. He is in the wrong. He is in the wrong. He is in the wrong.

This vexation filled Job and there are many points in the book of Job where my eyes widened and my brows raised. We understand the blamelessness of Job’s life leading into all of his suffering, but in the middle of his suffering, his view of things became so embittered that he spoke in irreverent ways before the Lord.

We get this sense as we read through the book of Job. That is what Elihu was giving expression to. Job defended his own righteousness to the point of casting aspersions upon God. That is what Elihu then challenged.

There is in fact a narrow path between defending one’s self against false accusations and the self-righteousness that would condemn God or speak against God as we defend ourselves. So Elihu was saying, You are coming close to a certain line, Job. Watch out for this!

I think this brings an important application for our lives, because we live in this fallen world with everybody else. While sin ultimately opened up the experience of pain and suffering upon human beings, we know that there are experiences of pain that are brought into the lives of those who don’t know the Lord in judgment for sin, and in the lives of those who do know the Lord as God ordains these things to refine their lives, according to His infinite wisdom.

It is possible when we, the follower of Christ, go through times of suffering that we too might have this sourness rise up within us against the Lord. This comes out in our laments and that’s okay, but it is something that we need to be discerning of; that when we go through hard times, we might become embittered and that bitterness is an expression of the sin that still lingers within us. So we need to be careful.

As I thought about this I began thinking about Job in terms of a spring of water; a natural spring somewhere in the forest. Then I thought about a visit when I was about ten-years-old to Pennsylvania. There was a cabin out in the Allegheny Forest owned by the Saltzmann family.

Ironically, it was called The Lucky Buck Hunting Lodge. Really lucky for that buck, right? I remember as a kid our family was visiting there. Dad told me to go out to the spring that had clear water. He told me to get a bucket and bring in some water for us to drink.

That spring had pure and pristine and had cold water that you could drink. I went out with the big responsibility to get drinking water. I plunged the bucket in the water and dropped it. It went down to the bottom, hit the sediment, and then poof all the powdery dirt filled the spring. I was so upset and worried, wondering how to tell my dad that I ruined the spring forever!

Eventually the sediment settled again, but this is a picture of Job and the followers of the Lord. Yes, we are all sinners saved by grace but by the work of the Holy Spirit, there is an increased godliness and purity that comes about in our lives.

So in the life of Job. Throughout his years following the Lord he could have fellowship with Him and could drink in all the things that he could say and teach others about the Living God. Job could take these things in and be refreshed and be spiritually hydrated, but here in the midst of his hardship, it was like stones had been plunge down and hit the bed of the well and all of the dust rose up.

So we must be careful throughout much of the book of Job about drinking in everything that he said, because you will also be drinking in some of his lingering sin that was being revealed. That is what was going on throughout so much of the book of Job. That is what makes sense to me as I think about all the things that Job said in guts of the book.

This can happen in our lives as well. It doesn't even take profound suffering. All I need to do is stub my toe in the middle the night on some dumbbell that was left where it wasn't supposed to be left, and I can get so upset and yelling. You better not be drinking in that kind of speech from the pastor.

There can be times in the middle of the things that we experience where there is frustration, consternation, irritation, bitterness, and it could be released toward people. There is a way about suffering where things get revealed in us.

Even those who walk with the Lord, times of suffering can make known that there is still much holiness to be pursued and that sin is still there and things can get stirred up. Then we call upon the Lord to continue to purify our lives.

In the middle of all these things, brothers and sisters, what kind of church do we want to be? We are in fellowship with each other and if we are living in honest and real fellowship, we are going to be honest with each other about the pain that we experience through the hardships of this life. In the middle of those trials and difficulties, some of us struggle to have the joy of James 1 and Romans Chapter 5, because our initial response is to complain and scream.

Yet we come together in fellowship, being careful about what we drink in from suffering brothers and sisters. We love them. We put our arms around them and then we seek to be a fresh spring of water to them, as they are going through the process of refining.

I think this was going on here with Job. In the middle of all the things we are talking about, we are in Christ, sinners saved by grace, we are counted righteous as a gift before God, justified by faith, but we still have sin linger in us.

In this, how precious to know that we have a Sympathetic High Priest who was tempted and tested as we are and in the midst of the things that get stirred up in our lives, He does not get repelled from us.

Even in the things that our sufferings reveal, He gets drawn into us with affection that is unconditional, full of grace and mercy, as He seeks to fill us with His Spirit and to bring us to even greater measures of purity of life and to restore us on a path that is growing in holiness. He loves us and in our suffering, His heart yearns for us all the more.

I have been so blessed reading a book called *Gentle and Lowly* by Dane Ortlund. I can't wait to read it again because like few other books that I have read in recent times, it takes us to the heart of our Messiah for the sinners and the sufferers that He has redeemed that comprise His church. Jesus has a heart of unsearchable love, even in the middle of the impure things that our sufferings might reveal in us.

Elihu put his finger on a problem. As we continue we see that:

3. Elihu opens a door of understanding (36:1-16)

It was a door of understanding as to how God is at work within the purposes of His people. Let me not understate the fact the Elihu is a challenge. He did not have the access to what we have access to in the behind scene glimpse into Heaven in Job Chapters 1 and 2.

I don't know how deeply penetrating Elihu's understanding of Job's situation was, but he adjusted things to get us on the right track as to how God is working through the sufferings that we experience.

This helps us to understand that it is not just those who are the wicked who suffer. So as we continue, we get into the section where Elihu opened this understanding to us. He made clear that there is such a thing as a righteous sinner.

There are people who have been redeemed by grace, they belong to the Lord and have been counted righteous by the grace of God, and they still have sin in their lives, even as they are growing in righteousness.

The theology of that day as understood by Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar did not really have categories like that. Yet, what we understand is that a person can be righteous and simultaneously have sin in their lives. This is as we await the return of Christ.

Let's see what is here in Chapter 36, beginning in Verse 5, Elihu said:

**⁵Behold, God is mighty, and does not despise any;
he is mighty in strength of understanding.
⁶He does not keep the wicked alive,
but gives the afflicted their right.
⁷He does not withdraw his eyes from the righteous,
but with kings on the throne
he sets them (the righteous) forever, and they are exalted.
⁸And if they (the righteous) are bound in chains
and caught in the cords of affliction,
⁹then he declares to them their work
and their transgressions, that they (the righteous) are behaving arrogantly.
¹⁰He opens their ears to instruction
and commands that they (the righteous) return from iniquity.**

Then look at what it says in Verses 15:

**¹⁵He delivers the afflicted by their affliction
and opens their ear by adversity.**

What we have read here, especially in Verses 5 through 10, may sound very, very similar to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. The wicked suffer. The righteous are exalted. We don't dispute with that. The wicked will come under God's judgment and ultimately those who are righteous in the Lord, they are going to be exalted in His Everlasting Kingdom. The trouble comes when we try to apply that simplistic understanding to every single situation.

What is different here and slightly off, but points us in another direction all together, is that Elihu did not count Job as a wicked man. The others placed him in that category. Wicked! Each one of Job's friends had declared him capital W—Wicked.

They had numbered Job in that way. Job, you are a wicked man as proved by your monumental suffering and you must turn and repent—capital R—and return to God. That is not what Elihu was saying. Elihu counted Job among the righteous.

Elihu was saying to Job, I have known your life and your walk with the Lord. You are a righteous man, but your response to all the calamity is revealing the sin that remains in your life. Nowhere did Elihu say, like the others said, the stark declaration that sin and wickedness led to Job's suffering.

However, Elihu did say that in the midst of the suffering, Job resorted to sin and that all that was going on in his life should open his ears to the Lord; how the Lord speaks to us about our lives and our ability to become arrogant in the middle of the difficult things we face. That is what Elihu was saying.

I read this and I was reminded of a quote from years ago by a man named C.S. Lewis, something that he said in a book that he wrote called *The Problem of Pain*. He declared pain to be the megaphone that God speaks into lives with.

This morning I was up early reviewing this message and I wanted to dig into the broader context of what Lewis wrote about, and I came across an article on desiring God by a young man named Daniel Ritchie.

Ritchie in his article spoke about the book *The Problem of Pain*, where Lewis spoke about pain being the megaphone that God uses to speak into our lives has helped him tremendously in his life.

Daniel Ritchie is a man who was born without arms. That led him into all manner of difficulty and pain and frustration that he experienced throughout his life. He found himself ministered to by the writings of C.S. Lewis, especially where Lewis considered pain something of a megaphone.

Ritchie said:

“My condition of being without arms is like a billboard for my suffering. There is no way I can hide the fact that I have suffering in my life like other people can do. It is known that I have difficulty.”

So this statement by C.S. Lewis helped him. And commenting on the life of Lewis, Daniel Ritchie said:

“He lost his mother at an early age, saw his dad emotionally abandon him, suffered from a respiratory illness as a teenager, fought and was wounded in World War 1, and finally had to bury his beloved wife.”

Through it all, Lewis wrote about his heartache and his pain and how all that experience led to him to write his book called *The Problem of Pain*. In that book, C.S. Lewis said:

“Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”

When life is all that it should be there is the tendency in us to just move through life, skating along in more or less superficial ways. However, when difficult things happen in our lives, there is the ability to hear the Lord speaking into our lives which we don't hear when life is easy.

So there is substance and maturing that happens in the heavy times that does happen in easy times. That is what Lewis recognized and the author of Psalm 119 would say amen to that! The testimony of the writer of Psalm 119 in Verses 66 and 67 and 71 to the Lord, said:

**⁶⁶Teach me good judgment and knowledge,
for I believe in your commandments.
⁶⁷Before I was afflicted I went astray,
but now I keep your word.**

In Verse 71, he even said:

**⁷¹It is good for me that I was afflicted,
that I might learn your statutes.**

So the Palmist here would understand that there is a way in which our ears are opened to the Lord uniquely in times of pain. I think the Apostle Paul would say the same thing.

We know that Paul had the experience where he was caught up into the Third Heaven. He heard things that could not be uttered, and then he was released back into ministry here on the earth. And to keep him from becoming arrogant, the Lord pinned him down with a thorn in his side.

It was some kind of affliction that was painful for Paul. Satan even had a hand in it similarly to what we read in the opening chapters of the book of Job. Paul had seasons of prayer asking that the thorn would be taken away, but then he came into a deeper and profound understanding of how things happen in suffering that don't happen walking on easy street.

In 2 Corinthians 12:8-10, Paul said:

⁸Three times I pleaded with you Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Paul heard the voice of the Messiah speaking into his life, a word that rings forth from the First Century into the lives of all those who belong to the Lord: My grace is sufficient for you. My power is made perfect in weakness.

There is a refining and a deepening in our lives that happens in times of hardship that does not happen in other ways. Therefore, by the Holy Spirit we are able to say, We will count it all joy when we experience trials of various kinds.

Brothers and sisters, the Lord knows you. The Lord knows your life. The Lord knows what is hidden in your heart. The Lord knows the things that you may or may not express to the people around you. The Lord is with His bride, the church, and each person that comprises it.

He is with you with His understanding. He is with you with His stomach moving in compassion. He is with you by the power of His Spirit to see you through and to mold your life and to give you His love in ways that when we get into eternity, we are going to see how God was at work and we are going to rejoice in the unsearchable wisdom of God which in that perspective will become a bit more searchable.

He is with us. He loves us. He will see us through. He will buoy us up. He will lift our hearts and He will cover us with His compassion and with His grace. I pray that the Holy Spirit will give us ears to hear what is spoken of in relation to times of hardship, not just in the Old Testament in the book of Job, but that which saturates the New Testament as well. He is with us. He loves us, and He has glorious purposes even for the tears that we shed.

With this, we will go to the Lord, calling upon Him to help us through the times of need that we become so aware of when we hurt. Let's go to the Lord.