

An Eternal Perspective

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[0 : 0 0] thanks very much Stuart and it would be worth keeping that chapter open in front of you in your Bibles as we look through this and as we continue our series through Job together one of the bits that I enjoy when you go to the cinema and I don't know if this happens all the time and I don't really know why it happens but you sit and you watch the trailers for however long they take hours it seems you get used to the cinema and then when the actual feature presentation the film that you've come to see comes on that the screen or at least the portion of the screen being projected onto somehow gets kind of wider it broadens out and you suddenly get this much larger view you get this kind of expanded horizon for some reason I always find that a bit quite exciting maybe that might just be me but I mention it because in some ways in this passage in Job chapter 19 we're about halfway through the book here in this passage we see a few things repeated things we've seen before we'll go through those briefly again but really the key to this passage the development that we see here is Job expanding his horizons coming to see that there is more that the way God's world works is bigger than he or his friends had previously appreciated and that's not to say in any way that all of Job's questions or difficulties are answered we'll see that Job is still really wrestling with what's going on but Job brings into that picture into that difficult picture the idea of eternity

Job brings into that picture the idea that there is something more there is some hope beyond even the grave that this life is not all there is and as we get to see that idea and this morning as we trace that idea through the rest of the Bible as well we'll see that seeing life in light of eternity is vital if we're to make any sense of the suffering which is such a big part of this book of Job which is such a big and an unavoidable part of life in a fallen world that expanding our horizons that seeing that bigger picture is essential for making sense of what is right there in front of us again not answering all our questions not making everything simple certainly not taking away our suffering but actually helping us to grow in wisdom by viewing all of that in light of who God is so let's look at this chapter together again this is another of Job's replies to his friends who have these repeated speeches that make up a big chunk of this book we've skipped over a few of them we were in chapter 9 last week we're 19 this down there's these kind of repeated speeches from these friends who have this fairly simple system which is basically if you do good well good things will happen to you if you do evil bad things will happen to you therefore Job you must have done something wrong to be suffering like this that's the kind of summary of their repeated speeches but we know and Job knows his innocence and so he replies to defend himself chapter 19 is another of these replies and what we really see in this chapter two sections that we'll look through it we see Job's experience what Job thinks is going on what Job thinks is happening to him and then secondly we see Job's hope and this is where that kind of expanded horizon comes in as Job starts to hold on to this idea have some certainty in this idea that there is more to life than just what is around him this idea of eternity is brought in to the picture there is more than just this life marked as it is by struggle and suffering so let's look at those together first up

Job's experience what Job feels he's going through and we can kind of summarize this by saying two things that Job feels attacked and abandoned attacked and abandoned first attacked in reply to his friend Bildad who's been kind of having a go at him throughout chapter 18 and really in response to all of his friends who've been offering their advice which is really just criticism and blame in these previous chapters Job says how long will you torment me and break me into pieces with words how long are you going to keep on having a go at me verse 3 these 10 times you've cast reproach upon me are you not ashamed to wrong me all your speeches just slugging me off he's basically saying surely you can see that's not okay you should be ashamed of yourself but he goes on to say verse 5 if you are going to magnify yourselves against me if you're going to make yourselves look good at my expense if you must make my disgrace an argument against me if you're going to use my suffering as proof of my guilt well know this

Job says verse 6 know then that God has put me in the wrong and closed his net about me and that term there put me in the wrong it carries this meaning of really kind of perverting justice Job is not saying that he is in the wrong he's saying that is the category God has put him in despite his actions it's as if God has plucked him up he thinks and kind of dropped him down in the bag of evil or wicked people God is dealing with him as if he were wrong now the attack that Job is going through that is really troubling him isn't what his so-called friends are saying and doing to him it's what he experiences God as doing to him it's God who he thinks is attacking him and that's what verses 8 down to 12 are all about he has walled up my way he has stripped from me my glory he breaks me down on every side he has kindled his wrath against me and counts me as his adversary verse 12 his troops come on together they have cast up their siege ramp against me and encamp around my tent this amazing image picturing little Job there in the middle in his tent being kind of buffeted by the wind and surrounding him is this vast military might representing

God's power their weapons trained on poor helpless Job and that's how Job is understanding this experience that God in his awesome power has set himself against Job in his helpless weakness Job feels attacked and attacked by God himself and again this might feel familiar this is something that Job has spoken about repeatedly we picked up on it a couple of times we saw it in the very first couple of weeks we saw it again last week you can catch up on those online we spoke about it in a bit more detail there but it is worth reminding ourselves emphasizing again what is happening here because Job has always really operated out of this same simple system that his friends are repeating if you do good God gives you good if you do evil God gives you bad it's this very small system Job hasn't seen what's going on in chapter 1 and 2 the introduction to the book where we actually see that it is

[7 : 50] Satan it is the reality of supernatural evil in a fallen world which is causing all this for Job in fact there's a really interesting comparison here in verse 21 for the hand of God has touched me Job says he thinks all that has come on him is from God's hand actually we read back in chapter 1 and 2 God says to Satan two times that Job is in your hands it's actually from Satan's hands that all of this suffering is coming again as with last week Job doesn't know that and so he is wrestling with God's character how could God do this to him he feels attacked but in Job's experience as well as feeling attacked he also feels abandoned and he lays this out in verse 13 down to 22 he says he has put my brothers far from me and those who knew me are wholly estranged from me my relatives have failed me my close friends have forgotten me the guests in my house and my maidservants count me as a stranger and then from verse 17 down

Job lists his wife his siblings children friends all turned against him and while Job may be mistaken about the nature of him being attacked in terms of being abandoned he's probably completely right certainly from the evidence we have what we've seen what we've heard of his friends Eliphaz Bildad Zophar they are not there encouraging him they are running him down and accusing him they are breaking him in pieces with their words as Job says in the time of Job's greatest suffering in his lowest point in his hour of need he doesn't look around and find support and friendship from his loved ones instead he is abandoned he is forsaken he says completely alone and presumably that is because they all operate out of this same kind of system their thoughtfulness must be wow

Job must be a really bad guy for these really bad things to happen to him you know God must be really displeased with Job so it's probably best if we kind of keep our distance as well we don't want to associate with someone like that and that's Job's experience attacked and abandoned and really I think that's there to set the scene for what we're about to look at Job's hope even in the face of that that's what we're going to kind of major on this morning but I think there are still some pretty simple points we can take from this as well first is to make sure that we remember the bigger picture in some ways the more complicated picture that when bad things happen to us when we suffer as we all will that we remember that this isn't God attacking us it's such an easy thing to fall into thinking but that we don't make that same mistake that Job is making this isn't God attacking us but actually as much as we don't like to think about it that we take seriously the reality of Satan the Bible gives us very clearly the reality of evil our force is less than God but opposed to God and if we just try and ignore that and block that out and say that sounds silly or childish or whatever then we'll struggle actually in the face of suffering because who else could cause it but God it's important to remember that the reality of

Satan that's a key point running through the book of Job in a way we are attacked but not by God but by the evil which is opposed to everything that God has created and everything good that God is doing we perhaps don't like to think about that and it's right not to kind of overly dwell on that we don't want to be fixated on these things but we do need to remember the reality of that to understand the world that we live in and the situations that we and our loved ones go through the suffering that we see around us there's a scene in the BBC series Luther where Idris Elba is asked don't you believe in evil and he replies I have to I've seen it you know when we see pain and suffering in our world and we go through that as Job goes through that what we are seeing is the reality of evil not an angry capricious mean spirited

God attacking people at will not God putting people in the wrong unfairly as Job thinks it's happening but rather the opposition to God being worked out in our worlds and in our lives so as we think about Job's experience we need to remember again that suffering is not an attack from God but instead we want to take seriously the reality of evil but perhaps even more fundamentally perhaps even more simply and perhaps even more practically we just need to see that we don't abandon people in their time of suffering if suffering isn't God turning away from people and it isn't then it's so important that we don't turn away from people and that in people's hardest times and we've seen this in Job who was a good man but in hard times people have all sorts of questions about where God is and what God is doing but in those hard times they would always know that God's people are right there with them and alongside them it can be hard to move toward people who are going through hard times it can be costly walking with people through difficult times is not easy and yet again it's so important and hopefully one of the things that this book of Job can help us to do not to abandon but to stick with people in their suffering and gently patiently wisely through that be able to point them back to the hope that the gospel offers and that moves us into our second section we've seen

[14 : 14] Job's experience attacked and abandoned let's move on to Job's hope really kind of the last quarter of this chapter from verse 23 onwards let me read in fact verses 23 to 27 again because they are just incredible verses these are such great words from Job it says this oh that my words were written oh that they were inscribed in a book oh that with an iron pen and lead they were engraved in the rock forever for I know that my redeemer lives and at the last he will stand upon the earth and after my skin has been thus destroyed yet in my flesh I shall see God whom I shall see for myself and my eyes shall behold and not another my heart faints within me and really this is the point as we began by saying that Job's horizon expands as he finds hope he finds hope in a redeemer and a redeemer who will rescue beyond the grave as we said this idea of eternity of there being more than just this light comes to the fore in Job's mind and see how it's there with real confidence we saw last week chapter 9

Job was saying there is no orbiter which could have been translated if only there were an orbiter perhaps just a glimmer or a seed of hope of someone to connect him with God but look how by this point in the book although Job's situation is still the same although his experience is still bleak Job is able to say for I know that my redeemer lives Job is able to hold on to that with real confidence and that word there that Job uses for redeemer it's a word that can carry a big range of meanings it can mean a vindicator it can mean your champion it's someone who will speak up for you it's someone who will stand up for you and you feel you've been wronged it's someone who will intervene Job knows that he will not just fade away into injustice as helpless as he feels his friends words about him will not be the final word about him because he knows his redeemer lives his redeemer lives and I want to spend the rest of this morning just thinking about the hope that an eternal redeemer is able to offer even in the hardest of times even in the midst of suffering and it won't

I don't think come as any surprise to know that in the unfolding story of the bible that redeemer is revealed to be none other than Jesus Christ himself as I think about the difference that he makes that the hope that he offers as we look through three things that are particularly emphasized about this redeemer by Job that make all the difference and the first is simply that he lives and that we can say with Job my redeemer lives and we don't live in a hopeless world even when we are suffering we are not abandoned we are not left to our own devices we are not alone there is one speaking for us there is one vindicating for us there is one acting on our behalf we read in Romans chapter 8 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 and Jesus is that redeemer who lives and is representing us before God and so while Job's friends or Satan himself might accuse saying he's a sinner she's a sinner they deserve this punishment they deserve to suffer

Jesus our redeemer stands with God and says no that because Jesus lives because he has suffered in our place because he has died and yet rose again for those who trust in him Jesus is able to say these are my people these people are loved their suffering is not an argument against them it's not an indictment against them in suffering we can know we're not being attacked by God because in Jesus God himself is our redeemer who has suffered for us and now stands on our behalf declaring that because he lives we can know he is for us and not against us the first thing we see about this redeemer a foundational truth for us to always remember and remind ourselves and one another about Jesus the reason we can find hope in him is because he lives a second job goes on to say my redeemer lives and at the last he will stand upon the earth as well as knowing that

Jesus lives it's essential we know that Jesus will return and again this is where that idea of eternity comes into the picture that makes all the difference God is not finished with his creation we're not at the end of the story even our death will not be the end of the story but actually Jesus the redeemer will return one of the things that in a lot of ways I found kind of hard going through Job and trying to follow the argument of this book is not being able to look forward there's that kind of temptation to jump ahead and look and see what's to come and yet we've tried not to do that because so far Job hasn't yet been doing that and yet now he's able to see that the thing that makes the biggest difference when we consider our fallen world when we consider the suffering that we go through when we see the injustice all around us when we see good people just being dragged through one thing after another after another and none of it their fault the thing that I truly believe makes the biggest difference and the reason that the Bible can offer a genuine hope where the world has none where the world either just has to say well that's how things are so get used to it or you know just kind of suck it up grin and bear it the thing that makes all the difference in the world is to look forward and say that Jesus that the

[20 : 52] Redeemer is coming back and that he is not finished with his creation but as Job says that at the last he will stand upon the earth and we see this laid out for us at the close of the Bible the final book the book of Revelation speaks about that time when Jesus the Redeemer will return in victory and that that will be the time when Satan will be defeated that will be the time when suffering is no more great words in Revelation chapter 21 which I think we could almost say are the climax of the whole Bible that say of that day God himself will be with them as their God he will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore for the former things have passed away Job just gets this glimpse which the rest of the Bible confirms of the Redeemer coming back to his creation the return of the king and that is the time when suffering is done away with and that is the time when God will rule with perfect justice where Satan will have no place where every trace of sin and its consequences will be removed and where perfection will be restored where we will enjoy life as it was designed to be the return of the

Redeemer and thirdly and perhaps most incredibly of all Job says of this Redeemer and after my skin has thus been destroyed yet in my flesh I shall see God and this Redeemer will not just kind of return to do his own thing it's not that the Redeemer will come back but it will be too late for poor Job he'll be long gone and perhaps many of us will be as well Job knows that even after his own death even after his skin is destroyed his body is given up that still he shall see God whom I shall see for myself he says and again we're not kind of getting the full picture here Job himself is confident and yet doesn't know all of the details it's looking kind of to a mountain in the midst where you see it's there you can see it's solid but you can't make out all of the different features it's a bit hazy it's a bit like how Job is looking forward but he's looking forward and speaking here about resurrection isn't he about physical bodily resurrection his confidence his hope is in the fact not just that the

Redeemer lives but that Job will live again in my flesh I shall see God and the Christian hope in suffering is that this life is not all there is but there is the certainty of resurrection to come not resurrection simply to more of the same not a kind of reincarnation where we get to have another go and see if we can do better next time but a resurrection into the perfectly restored creation ruled by the returned Redeemer Jesus Christ a resurrection to where we will see God with our own eyes and enjoy being with him forever and that is the only way that we can make sense of our suffering here and now that's the only way we can deal with suffering here and now and that knowledge that there is a Redeemer that he was the ultimate righteous sufferer that he suffered unto death even death on a cross he took

God's anger at sin the punishment for sin so that we might know that he is not the cause of our suffering and yet he rose again my Redeemer lives he will return he will restore and he will welcome in those who have trusted in him we shall see him face to face and that is the hope that is the kind of enlarged horizon that is the bigger picture where Job finds his confidence here in this chapter and where we need to look to that is the hope we have also to hold out to those who are suffering not to say well you know it's not that bad not to say I'm sure that you'll look back and laugh not to say in a few weeks or months or years it'll all make sense we don't know any of those things we can't promise any of those things but that the Redeemer lives and invites us to put our trust in him that is what the Bible promises that is the hope that we're able to share that he will return that he will restore that he will welcome and actually

Job then finishes this chapter really by I suppose turning the tables on his friends a little bit his friends we call them really his accusers might be a more accurate term verse 28 and 29 speaking again to them he says if you say how we will pursue him and the root of the matter is found in him be afraid of the sword for wrath brings the punishment of the sword that you may know there is a judgment Job is saying here if you keep your tiny little system you know your kind of karma as it were your rules that say good things happen to good people bad things happen to bad people that's it you know this system that has no space for undeserved suffering really no space for grace no space for or need for a redeemer we'll be careful Job says because there will be a judgment that's where this chapter finishes you know one day our actions will be weighed we don't get all we deserve here and now suffering does not mean sinfulness but we will get it in the future we will get it in eternity

[26 : 45] Job's friends who think that because they're doing fine they must have done nothing wrong who therefore feel able and compelled even to kind of accuse others and find fault in other people actually unless they recognize their need for this redeemer it is they who will face this judgment if they're trusting in their righteousness it is they who are heading for a fall instead for them and for all of us this morning they need to look to the redeemer the redeemer the bible reveals as God himself in the person of Jesus Christ it's only for those who like Job or for like you this morning if you're a Christian have put their trust in Jesus that can have this eternal confidence that makes all the difference in the suffering that we go through here and now and that's an invitation to put our trust in Jesus to find our hope in him to lay claim to that redeemer that is an invitation which is there open and offered to all of us let me finish with these great words again for I know that my redeemer lives and at the last he will stand upon the earth and after my skin has been thus destroyed yet in my flesh

I shall see God whom I shall see for myself and my eyes shall behold and not another let's pray together heavenly father so often our horizons are so small we think and we live as if this life is all there is and then when hard times come when we see or experience suffering it's heartbreaking because there's nowhere else to look there's nothing else we can put our hope in Lord please help us to see our existence in light of eternity please help us to really grasp in our day to day lives that there is more than just this world and that although there is great pain and suffering here and now that you have promised restoration that you have promised a perfect future where suffering and pain will be no more where every tear from every eye will be wiped away but we thank you that you have made that possible through Jesus and that he is the redeemer who has acted on our behalf and that he suffered in our place that he rose again victorious that our redeemer lives that he will return to reign and that our eyes will see him

Lord we ask that you would help us to trust in him to find our hope in him and that even in the darkest of times we will be able to look ahead and live in anticipation of that day when we will see face to face when suffering will be no more and we will live for all eternity in your glory Lord please help us to be encouraged with that truth please help us to encourage one another with that truth please help us to encourage those we know in the world around us with that truth gently wisely patiently drawing alongside them in their suffering and pointing them to the hope that is only found in the gospel Lord we just pray very practically and very mundanely that you would help that truth of eternity and the gospel to stay with us this week as the reality of our world hits us once again and Lord we ask that in all this we would do this for your strength and for your glory and we pray this in Jesus name

Amen