

A Happy Ending Promised

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[0 : 0 0] thanks very much angus yeah so here we are at the close of the book of job we've been looking through this book for a couple of months i think nine weeks i think it is maybe i hope it's been helpful i've certainly found it helpful i think challenging but also encouraging in equal measure and we're looking at the final passage of this book this morning and i do want to say just as we begin looking at this final passage that we just need to be careful here as we wrap things up in this book because there is a way of reading these last few verses which can actually completely kind of undercut or can completely undo everything that we've looked at and spoken about so far because we could read these verses that angus has just read to us these verses that we've just heard and we could just simply say couldn't we well that's that's all worked out great hasn't it you know that has all sorted itself out nicely for job what a happy ending a few years ago now i never really got into it but i'm sure that some people here were fans was was the finale and it was kind of remarked that this finale was basically just wall to wall good news that every single storyline resolved positively that everyone went away happy it was just kind of sickly sweet almost just a little bit too neat and tidy i wonder if there's a danger we think that's what's happened at the end of job and the danger is that if we think that that's what's happening here in job we'll probably go away with one of two thoughts either uh we'll perhaps quite rightly uh be a bit cynical i will say well that's great for job isn't it but actually that just doesn't fit with real life that's not what happens this book of job is obviously you know pie in the sky it's it's downtown abbey it bears no relation to reality uh what's the point uh it's not there's no use uh or secondly and perhaps even more dangerously i think uh we might go away thinking that actually it is just that simple uh that actually you've got a problem well yeah i suppose it might be tough for a week a month maybe even a year but then actually it won't last you know actually god will just step in and sort everything out that you'll look back and laugh as we're so kind of keen or quick often to say to people going through hard times well i want to say it be a massive shame if we went away this morning with either of those two as our final thoughts from this book of job this book of job which actually throughout the last couple of months we've seen has dealt so genuinely has dealt so honestly has dealt so realistically with the complexity of suffering and with seeing god in that that it's not been this unrealistic book it's not been an overly simplistic book so then how do we avoid that that conclusion this morning how do we make sense of these final verses well above all what we need to see as we get to the end of this book is that what we have here is a picture of what is still to come what what we're looking at this morning is not what we are promised in a week or a month or a year or even in this life but is a picture of what is in store beyond all of that really this is a picture of what the bible calls the new creation it fits in just with what ross was saying before that god has promised to restore the perfection of his world that there is ultimately a happy ending but that's not so simplistic as to think well that is all going to happen here and now and so really the big pictures we get stuck

into this passage is this it's a picture to encourage us that when as we've just been thinking about things are tough that when suffering comes when we don't understand what god is doing and it will be easier just to say well forget it what's the point perhaps for you this morning when you when you feel like you're holding on to your faith with your fingertips because of what you're going through because of what's happening in the world around you because of what other people are saying well this passage is here to give us this picture this encouragement of what is still to come this is what god has promised to those who like job are his people to those who like job fear the lord and turn away from evil as he's described those who as we saw last week like job repent and recognize the greatness of god and their need of him now this is what god promises for his people so what do we see what's in store what does god promise we're going to see two things that we're going to look at and the first is this that god will vindicate his people that god will vindicate his people this is really in verses 7 through to 9 i'll read 7 and 8 you can follow along in your bibles there if you like after the lord had spoken these words to job the lord said to eliphaz the temanite my anger burns against you and against your two friends for you have not spoken of me what is right as my servant job has now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant job and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves and my servant job shall pray for you for i will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly for you have not spoken of me what is right as my servant job has now what's happening there well we hear it repeated again and again and again isn't it it is god giving job his stamp of approval job is my servant job is my man job is vindicated by god in in the book of job there has been this huge section in the middle of the book where this guy eliphaz and his two friends bildad and zophar they're called have really been sort of laying into job they've been telling job he must have done something terrible he must be hiding some awful secret because in their way of viewing the world bad things only happen to bad people in their way of viewing the world god is not a such a person as some kind of cosmic equation some kind of process or or machine where if you put in your good works well then you'll get blessed but if you do bad stuff well then out will come suffering and yet job has been saying throughout well i don't have all the answers but what you guys are saying that cannot be the case because that's not what's happening here we know as job knows he's not got some hidden sin somewhere and so here is god speaking and so clearly saying actually it is job here that has got it right job has spoken what is true the friends need to go to job who will pray for them god says he will listen to job's prayer god vindicates job it doesn't mean job's got everything perfect we've seen a few times job has said things he shouldn't he's spoken out of turn he himself admits that at the start of chapter 42 i have uttered what i did not understand job is not perfect but the point is that that job has been kind of in the right ballpark although he's made mistakes while his friends have been playing a completely different game altogether job has been striving after almost wrestling with a relational god a god that he can know while his friends have been putting forward not a relational

god but this kind of robotic god they have this neat picture that we've spoken about it's simple it's predictable they have all the answers and yet actually we see here it bears no relation to the true god and the passage is clear that that angers god that they are in the wrong job has got it right they have spoken wrongly about him but job has been true that god is a personal god that we're to relate to and the point is that in the end holding on to what is true about god rather than maybe what is most rather than what necessarily everyone else is saying that actually knowing the real god is what matters most we'll all face pressure perhaps most of all in times of suffering to think well what's the point you know just as there was for job there'll always be plenty of people around telling us you know we're wasting our time we've got it wrong to hope in god is pointless it doesn't mean anything that they could offer some neat and tidy solution instead of that and yet god's promise is that those who hold fast to him will be vindicated in the end and of course it's jesus himself who is the ultimate example of that again as ross said the whole bible we're in the old testament here the time before jesus but the whole bible is pointing us toward him jesus is the ultimate righteous sufferer that this book of job is pointing us to and as jesus hung on the cross as jesus there suffered more than we could ever imagine or comprehend the gospel of matthew one of the eyewitnesses there tells us how jesus was mocked how his trust in god was ridiculed he trusts in god let god deliver him now the people said you know why would you be going through all of this if god is really there why would you be going through all of this if you were truly right with god how on earth could jesus die if all that he'd said about himself and all that he'd said about god was true he was mocked he was doubted and yet three days later as jesus was raised from the tomb in the resurrection he was completely vindicated it is proven isn't it that what he said about god and also what he said about himself as god is true is right and one day the bible tells us again that that vindication of jesus the hero of that bible story will be complete when the bible promises that he will return not as a baby in a manger as we'll think about over the next month or so but that jesus will return as the victorious king and on that day the bible says everyone will recognize his greatness every knee will bow everyone will recognize the truth and for us as we said our vindication isn't promised in the here and now but what is promised is that on that day that day when jesus returns returns that those who have held on to that truth of who god is who have accepted in some ways the mystery of how god works that we don't get all the answers that he doesn't explain everything to us but most fundamentally have continued to trust in the gospel if we want to be at the heart of everything we do as a church the heart of everything that we are as people those whose hope has been in jesus in his life his death in his resurrection those who've held on to that in the face of of scorn or mocking or laughter and those who've kept on with that even going through hard times and suffering and that those will be the ones who will be vindicated they will be shown by god himself

to have been in the right about him just as job was in our busy lives i think especially perhaps in the hardest of times it can be really hard to remember perhaps hard to believe that ultimately in the kind of final reckoning of things what we believe to be true about god how we relate to god what we hold on to about god is actually the most important thing it's so easy for us to think well god is something i'll think about when i'm a bit older god is something i'll consider when i've got a little bit of spare time god is something i'll think about once i've just got through this situation or or when i feel the need of him or god is something that is you know i'm sure helpful and interesting for other people and yet actually the bible is clear it is the one thing we need to hold on to throughout our lives it is the most important thing what we think of god how we relate to god it's not something that that will solve all our problems i hope we've been really clear on that going through joe but actually when the end comes what we hold to be true about god is the only thing that will matter will we like job be found to have spoken what is right about god and to have held on to that truth of a relational god to have repented to have turned to him and to have put our trust in jesus the perfectly righteous sufferer suffering in our place and that even in the storms of life even in the times when we're told and tempted to just give up on god or just kind of sideline him even in the times when we are are confused and hurting and don't have the answers to everything that still we'd hold fast to him and the encouragement here as we come to the end of this book is that in doing that god will vindicate his people that if like job we persist we will hear those those words of god to us well done good and faithful servant that holding on to him as a relational god and trusting in that relationship that jesus makes possible that we will be vindicated and so enjoy that relationship with him forever and so there's the first thing the first encouragement we see here something to keep us going when times are hard to stick with god to stick with the gospel because god will vindicate his people and so there's number one god will vindicate his people the other thing we see here then that the second half of this passage really from verse 10 through to the end this this final encouragement in this book is that as well as god vindicating his people that god will also restore his people god will restore his people it says there verse 10 and the lord restored the fortunes of job when he had prayed for his friends and the lord gave job twice as much as he had before and then reading on from there there's this picture of such a great abundance isn't there there's relationships restored there's possessions restored in fact double more camels than you know what to do with there is there's kind of family and beauty and long life and that final verse verse 17 and job died an old man and full of days that's a way the bible uses to kind of speak about a a life well lived as god had restored to job all that he had lost and now again just to go back to what we said at the beginning we need to be a bit careful here if we just kind of pluck these verses out and say look this is what happened to job this is this is what will happen to you you know whatever's gone wrong god is going to put that right in in the here and now well that is a really dangerous and really unhelpful because it's ultimately a really

untrue thing to say perhaps especially if you hear that kind of thing tied up with how much faith you have you know if you just had enough faith you would get better you know or if you really trust in god then he'll make sure things work out well for you it'll all be for the best actually hearing that in terms of suffering it can devastate people to make it feel as if somehow this is their responsibility to add that layer of guilt on top of that suffering and if you have heard that that kind of thing in the past that i want to be really clear this morning that is not what the bible teaches the bible doesn't say that if you're suffering that is some kind of fault or some kind of lack of faith within you or that's some kind of bad stuff in the past that you're reaping the the consequences of and the bible doesn't say that in fact i hope we would recognize after our time in this book that's essentially what job's friends kind of inverted commas friends have been saying it's that same kind of karma or you know do good stuff believe enough you'll get good stuff it's that idea that that job has rejected and that god has vindicated job for rejecting again remember this passage is pointing us forward to what is to come this passage is putting us forward to what god has promised for those who hold on to him who keep on in that relationship with him made possible through jesus who endure in that even in the face of suffering but it's not what god promises right here and now but what he has promised in the end that jesus as we said will return that god will restore his people that god will restore all things you know there's a whole lot of pain in the book of job isn't there the first five verses of chapter one are quite cheerful and then there's like 42 other verses 42 other chapters and then it's really only again this last seven verses of the book that give us this joyful perspective this joyful picture and yet these final few verses are pointing us forward to an eternity in restored relationship with god in the restored perfection that he will recreate that the new creation that the bible speaks about there's a well-known section in the final book of lord of the rings the return of the king it's after the ring has been destroyed sorry if that ruins the ending for you you've had about 70 years to read it so it's okay but you know the ring is destroyed it's kind of symbolizes evil uh being defeated the end of that uh one of the hobbits uh samwise gamji he says is everything sad going to come untrue is everything sad going to come untrue uh jr r talking the the author of lord of lord of the rings was a christian and really that is his brilliant description of what god has promised of the new creation of the time after evil and suffering being destroyed that everything sad will come untrue that evil and suffering and sorrow will be undone we see that glimpsed here at the end of job what we will see fully when jesus returns that god will restore his people to the perfection uh he designed for them all that we have lost all that we have mourned all that we have had taken from us that will all be restored uh far more abundantly than we could ever imagine in this life or in this world again great words from the end of the book of revelation uh the last book in the bible looking ahead uh to this time i think i've said before these

[20:18] are perhaps my favorite verses in the bible so try and squeeze them into as many sundays as possible but you know this is the destination that christianity says the world is heading toward this is speaking about the great restoration god has promised and made possible through jesus for those who trust in jesus it says this and i heard a loud voice from the throne saying behold the dwelling place of god is with man he will dwell with them and they will be his people and 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 and that is the restoration that is promised sadness becoming untrue suffering being undone and in their place eternal joyful relationship with god in a restored perfection for his people for those who've trusted in jesus now and we're told this in revelation and we're given this picture of it here in job uh not just this kind of interesting information for what's to come in the future that we can kind of file away somewhere but because that is what gives us the encouragement to keep on going in the present and to keep on trusting in god or maybe even to turn to god for the very first time to keep on holding fast to the gospel of jesus to find out our hope there whatever may happen in our lives here and now we're given these great pictures of what is to come so that as the apostle paul writes in in the new testament we don't lose heart he writes this for this light momentary affliction and paul is not there saying that our struggles or the suffering we see around us is insignificant or doesn't matter he's comparing it to what is to come the greatness of what's to come for this great for this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen for the things that are seen are transient but the things that are unseen are eternal the encouragement is to keep on looking that's what god has promised keep on looking to what is solid what is eternal what will last in the midst of that the struggles and the difficulties we go through here and now god will vindicate his people god will restore his people and it says we remember that as we keep on looking to that that glorious perfect eternity that we're strengthened to keep on going keep on living for him in the here and in the now despite the hardships that will come and so the book of job finishes with real encouragement it finishes with the truths that we need to keep on going it is not as the whole book hasn't been simple platitudes about how stuff's not really that bad or you know stiff upper lip and all that no it doesn't undo what we've spoken about so far it takes the sorrow and the pain and the suffering of our world seriously but it does give us promises of what's in store god will vindicate his people god will restore his people so turn to god keep on going with god trust in jesus even in the midst of the the difficulties and the mess of real life and really that brings us to the end of this brilliant book of job not to say that we've kind of exhausted everything that could be said by any means we could spend months i think years probably deepening our understanding here of job and i'd encourage you to keep on coming back to this book

perhaps it feels slightly less daunting now we've kind of been looking at it together for a while we've got a bit of a way in i just wanted to finish really briefly i suppose with a bit of a summary or a reminder what have we learned going through this book what do we want to take away with us as individuals and as a church one thing perhaps a big thing the main thing perhaps for us to go away with is for this book to help us with our expectations to see that actually suffering isn't a strange exception suffering isn't a sign of us going wrong in our faith or our life but suffering is actually the normal experience in a fallen world including or perhaps especially for those who are christians and that in that we follow in the path of job even more so we follow in the path of jesus we've been praying this morning for stewart gibson we've been praying this morning for colin cameron as we think about that as we are in our last sunday here looking through the book of jove it seems almost i'm not sure what the right word is fitting almost that we close this book with two of our most loved most faithful most godly men from the church who will be catching up online because of illness because of sickness because of suffering not being able to be here and i'm sure you'll be aware of many more people that we know and love suffering other suffering going on in your own life looking at the book of jove shows us that as we face up to that as we experience the reality of that you know we've not gone wrong somewhere we've not strayed off the path god hasn't dropped the ball it's not not quite as good as we thought it was going to be it's not different to what was promised but actually this is how we would expect life to be in a fallen world this fits the bible's pattern because we're still in that that in between time that god hasn't yet restored all things to the perfection that we're looking forward to so this book shows us what to expect but i think it also hopefully helps us to know how we can better deal with that as well and the whole book helps us to deal with suffering in light of god in light of who god is now why are these last few verses we've looked at this morning about what god has promised why are they so powerful well i think they're far more powerful because they come at the end of this big long book they come at the end of 42 chapters of wrestling with god in suffering these aren't kind of short snappy simple easy answers that's 42 chapters of at times incredibly bleak darkness think back with me if you will if you were here when we looked at chapter 3 job having gone through this suffering saying that he wished he'd never been born that he was seeking that the rest of the grave as we come to this hopeful joyful destination at the close of the book let's not forget that that journey that this book of job takes us on because when we're suffering and when we draw alongside those who are suffering we want to be on that journey with them and not to simply jump to chapter 42 and say oh don't you know god is going to restore it's going to be okay in the end that's true but also to sit with them as like chapter 3 they mourn and see only darkness to listen with people as like chapter 9 they question where god is and what he's doing to help people like in chapter 19 see their need for a redeemer one who would connect them to god and to remind them like in chapter 28 that they might not get

all the answers they'd like but they can still trust in that god but through this journey to ultimately be able to point to the true god to speak rightly about god the god who answers job showing his awesome power and control and who promises in the end to vindicate and restore his people and really that reminds us that above everything else this is a book about god it's a book about a god who we can know in suffering a god we need to draw even closer to in suffering and a god we can continue to worship in the midst of suffering a god who understands suffering and in jesus christ has himself suffered and as this book once again points us to jesus the ultimate righteous sufferer who has suffered for us who has suffered in our place and it says we know god by trusting in jesus that we can continue to be his people and in light of that he has looked forward to all that he has promised that is in store for his people let's pray together