

# Trusting in God's sovereign purposes (Quality: Very good)

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[ 0 : 00 ]     Depending upon the help of the Lord, dear friends, I invite your prayerful attention to Job chapter 23.

These words, this psalm, this 23rd chapter I meant to say of Job, is one that has settled on my mind on Friday.

And I thought I might have spoken from it here before, and so I look back to my record and I find I did. And so I would just point out that it's quite deliberate that I take this tonight because I felt led to do so, I think it was 1998, when I spoke from a portion of this particular chapter before.

But I felt it, my mind directed to this for this evening, and I do trust and pray that the Lord will bless it to us as we meditate upon it together. And now there are one or two special places in this psalm, and we have in the third verse, Oh that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat.

And then of course he says in the tenth verse, but he knoweth the way that I take, and when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

[ 1 : 26 ]     And then in the thirteenth verse, and perhaps the thirteenth verse is perhaps uppermost in my mind tonight, but he is of one mind, and who can turn him?

And what his soul desireth, even that he doeth. Here we see the majesty of God in Job's estimation here as he has considered his position.

You know, you see, there's so much more, I believe, to this experience which is recorded in Job, than ever meets the eye, easily meets the eye, perhaps I should say.

You see, I see so much in the book of Job, for we read those early chapters, and we find that there's so much more here involved than would first appear.

For Job, by God's own analysis, is a perfect and an upright man. And therefore, it's quite clear to us that the trouble which came upon Job was not for his sin.

[ 2 : 39 ]     Now I hesitate there a moment, because I have heard on more than one occasion, people make comments, oh, so-and-so has happened to so-and-so, and the implication, if not uttered, is that it must be judgment for sin.

But it can often be not in anger, not in anger, but in God's dear covenant love, for you or for me, in the dealings of God with us.

Now we think of Job, God's testimony of Job, and yet here it seems that God is saying to Satan, You see, it seems as if he, put it in a way which we would understand in today's language, in expression, as if he throws the gauntlet to Satan as much as to say, Has thou considered my servant Job?

And of course, Satan's full of arguments, and he's full of attempt to undo Job, and he would try to dishonor God through Job.

And so, you see, what he said to him, to God regarding Job, and thou hast hedged him around, and so on, Put forth thy hand now, and touch him, and he will curse thee to thy face.

[ 3 : 59 ] And so, you see, God said, All right, he's in thy hand. In a way, he said, Do your worst, Satan. And Satan did his worst.

And what was the outcome of it? Satan had to depart as a defeated foe. Because instead of Job cursing God to his face, he blessed him. He said, Naked I came into this world.

Naked I came out of my mother's womb. Naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. And in exactly the opposite happened, to what Satan would have loved to have happened.

And what Satan designed to have happened. And you see, there's a great contest, can I put it that way, is the only word I can think of, going on between Satan and God.

I word it carefully that way round. Because Satan is the cause of the trouble. Satan is the one that's been cast out of heaven. I think perhaps this would be a good point for us to just look and remind ourselves about a portion we read in Revelation to help us understand the reason, as it were, for these things.

[ 5 : 16 ] We read in Revelation chapter 12, and at the 7th verse, we read down to the 12th verse, and we find that these amazing truths revealed here.

And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not.

Neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world.

He was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation and strength and the kingdom of our God and the power of his Christ.

For the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony.

[ 6 : 23 ] And they loved not their lives unto death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Then is the full stop. Woe unto the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea, for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

Now that explains most of the, all of the trouble in this earth. You see. Satan's been cast out by the power of God to this earth.

And he's going to be cast lower yet, into that bottomless pit, when the Lord comes with all the holy angels with him. In the meantime, his desire is to wreak all the havoc he can amongst the church of God.

Brings me to another thought, which I've had regarding this. We find that it was when the sons of God presented themselves before the Lord, Satan came also among them.

You know he still does, doesn't he? Have you ever experienced coming into the house of God, seeking truly for a true spirit of worship, endeavouring so to do, and when you attempt to do so, you find a wandering mind, you find Satan's crammed your mind with all sorts of things.

[ 7 : 53 ] He's enticed you away from that which you entered into the earthly courts to do. Don't ever underestimate the power of Satan, friends.

He's a frightful foe. He's a mighty foe. But we have an almighty God, you see. And so you see, in this aspect, we see at the beginning of the book of Job, that it was firstly not for Job's sin that all this had to be entered into in Job's experience, but it was for the glory of God.

And God was glorified in this matter, that he was able to give Job more grace than Satan could give him trouble.

God was able, I repeat that, and did give Job more grace than Satan could give him trouble.

What a mercy. What a God, friends. You and I all have troubles, do we not? Anxieties, the fear of the future, the various things which lay before us.

[ 9 : 06 ] But God has his hand over all these things. And God is working his purposes out. If you'll pardon a personal note a moment, I remember, I might have mentioned this before, I remember one particular evening going to the prayer meeting and feeling real churned up.

I was right at the end of my tether in the midst of running my business and all the difficulties that there was at one particular point. And you know, I went in and I felt really down, really flat, really as low as I could get.

I didn't know how I could go on. And there was a prayer meeting and the address given, the text was, The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. And the servant of God spoke from the power and the mercy of God and the wisdom of God and the working out of the covenant of God and in all these things that Satan tries to disrupt us in, God overturns and overturns because he will have the preeminence.

God will be eternally praised and Satan will be eternally banished. And so we see these things in the book of Job. I could go on along that line of things.

It's not my purpose tonight to continue further in that, but I felt as a, what can I say, background to this subject, that it would be good if we remember that God is giving sufficient grace.

[ 10 : 35 ] Right throughout the dealings of God with Job, he gave him grace sufficient for his day. And I believe the Apostle Paul would echo that word because when he prayed to God that his thorn in the flesh may be removed, the Lord said, my grace is sufficient for thee.

My strength is made perfect in weakness, in thy weakness, poor sinner. God's strength is made perfect. And it's in the proving of it, dear friends, that we know it's true.

I believe that the Apostle Paul, like Job, could speak with authority on these things.

Well, Job went through these very many things. He had had the very differing and miscellaneous advice and wisdom of his friends.

He'd had three friends, as I quite believe, I'm quite prepared to accept that they came out of good intention to see Job and they were friends. They sat down with him and mourned with him.

[ 11 : 48 ] And yet, they then began to form their opinions by reason and started to lay blame upon Job's door. And Job answers them and, you know, is as much to it all through.

But then we come to this point in the 23rd chapter. Then Job answered and said, Even today is my complaint bitter. My stroke is heavier than my groaning.

So he's reversing their accusations on him to some degree because he's saying, My complaint is bitter. My stroke is heavier than my groaning. I'm not making a fuss for nothing.

I can only scarcely bear what the Lord has allowed Satan to lay upon me, he could have put it perhaps. Oh, that I knew where I might find him.

That was his desire, soul desire. We spoke about the soul in the Sunday school, you dear children. It was his soul's desire, see, which was poured out before his God.

[ 12 : 51 ] Oh, you can hear the pressure, you can hear the weight in that oak, can't you? Oh, that I knew where I might find him. That I might come even to his seat.

It seems as if Job, in prophecy here, realized that there was a mercy seat, a place of approach where mercy could be found. Oh, that I might come even unto his seat.

I would order my calls before him and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words which he would answer me. and understand what he would say unto me.

He would understand what God is doing with him in these dealings. Friends, here's a lesson. We come into trouble through the journey of life, perplexities, difficulties, and we wonder what God is doing with us.

We wonder how it is that God has allowed this to come into our lives. Job, my friends, must have wondered why it was that this had come into his life.

[ 13 : 57 ] Now, just to break off that thought a moment and take an overview. The book of Job, as we understand it, godly scholars tell us, is the oldest book on record of the canon of Scripture as we have it.

Well, what does that teach us? Well, I believe it teaches us this, that this dealing which God had with Job was recorded early on. And so it's been a blessing, it's been instruction, comfort, guidance, and consolation to the whole church throughout the Old Testament dispensation, as well as now through the New Testament dispensation.

Because the book of Job is laden with godly messages for us, godly instruction in things divine. Now, if Job had known that, it would have made his burden a little bit lighter, wouldn't it?

He would have realised that God was doing something for the good of the whole of his church down through the ages. And we benefit today by the instruction which we find in the book of Job.

Yes. And so, he comes to this, behold, he says, he seeks him, behold, I go forward, but he is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive him.

[ 15 : 15 ] On the left hand, where he does work, he looks in creation, but I cannot behold him. He hideth himself on the right hand, and I cannot see him. Friends, have you had a prayer in your heart like that?

Have you prayed for something? And have you found that you feel as if the heavens were brass? Do you feel sometimes that your prayer is not going any higher than the ceiling?

What Job knew what it was, it's a trial of your faith, friends. It's a trial of my faith. And Peter picks up the theme that the trial of your faith be much more precious than that of gold which perisheth.

And so it is. Because faith will be turned to sight in glory, dear friends. Faith for this life will be turned to sight when the Lord comes again, either through the valley of the shadow of death or we meet him in the air.

Whichever that will be, we can safely leave that. Oh, friends, that we might be ready. But on the left hand where he does work, I cannot behold him. He hideth himself on the right hand that I cannot see him.

[ 16 : 22 ] And so poor Job is in this low state before his God. Now what does he say? But, but, another gospel but, dear friends, in Job.

But he knoweth the way that I take. Here's faith. He knew that whatever it was that God had brought him into, that God had a purpose in it.

And that he knew the way that he took. And, when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. Here's faith. Now faith's risen to its ascendancy here.

You see, I shall come forth as gold. He has the confidence not in himself but in that his God will bring him through whatever it is that he's laid in his pathway.

And so, thus far, he's proved the grace of God sufficient for his day. And friends, so will you and so do I. And so it is with the church down through the ages.

[ 17 : 25 ] But he knoweth the way that I take. And when he hath tried me, the trial is from him. I shall come forth as gold. So here we see the grace given of submission.

Submission to his will. And what a grace that is, friends. And if you're anything like I am, we need that very much to be given to us because we're rebellious by nature.

If I might speak for myself firstly, we're born rebellious. We're not ready to be obedient and submissive to the will of God.

We say thy will be done in words and in our hearts we want our own and wish our sufferings less, him writer says, doesn't he? And how true that is in the true experience of it.

Yes, but he knoweth the way that I take. And when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. This prospect, this faith, which is now risen to an ascendancy, as it were, it's come to its pinnacle here.

[ 18 : 31 ] For he says, I shall, you remember in the 19th chapter, he says, I know that my Redeemer liveth. You see how wonderful the faith of God is when it's in exercise.

And for faith to be in exercise, it's got to be tried and this is something that's painful. But it's a reality, dear friends, that God, if he gives us faith, he will try that faith and purify it, as I said before, as gold is purified in the fire.

And so, whatever is before you or I in the coming days, can we enter in with that faith when he knoweth the way that I take and when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

I clearly believe, he said, by his grace. He meant as by his grace and his enabling. There's nothing here that's of presumptuous or self-assertion. Don't misunderstand the word, dear friends.

No, he knoweth the way that I take and when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. It seems to me that it was very clear to Job that God had a purpose in it as though, as yet, he couldn't see it and he couldn't understand it.

[ 19 : 52 ] Yes, my foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept and not declined. He remembers back to what we read at the beginning perhaps about the sacrifices he offered in case his sons and daughters had sinned and cursed God in their hearts.

You see, he remembers those things that he sacrificed in obedience to that which was the thing in the old dispensation under the ceremonial law. Neither have I gone back from the commandments of his lips.

I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food. Friends, have you been in trouble at times and really you could honestly say that you'd rather have a word from the Lord than the next meal?

I believe that's what we can look at this. Sometimes when we're deep in trouble the last thing we need is actual food to eat bread and so on. You can be in trouble enough and you don't want that.

You're off your appetite actually but oh you do need a word from the Lord. The words of his mouth that sweet token of his felt presence and blessing that answer of peace in prayer as you offer your prayer to him on your knees in a humble heart I mean by that not necessarily physically on your knees you might be driving up the middle lane of a motorway and pour out your heart to the Lord before him and know a sweet answer of peace from it.

[ 21 : 27 ] But now he comes to these words I want to just dwell on a few minutes but he is in one mind and who can turn him and what his soul desireth even that he doeth.

Now here we see Job as it were viewing the situation as I see it he is in one mind the Lord for some mysterious reason to Job had allowed him to come into this trouble into this situation and it's the mind of the Lord he's quite clear of that in it all and he's submissive to that it is the mind of God in any way who can turn him he says his reason cuts in as it were at this point he says who can turn God whatever God's purposes are my friends they'll be worked out you know as I said to the children in the Sunday schools we come to a close regarding the soul of man you know it doesn't matter what man says it makes no difference it makes not the slightest scrapper difference what man's opinion is about things

God will work his purposes out and not believing in God as I said does not dispense with God there's going to be some solemn sad and rude awakenings my friends on that morning when the Lord comes when there is that day when we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ there'll be no doubts then that there's a God my friends no doubts at all not that there should be now because nature in open volume stands to spread and make us praise abroad and every labour of his hands shows something worthy of a God doesn't it so why should we doubt God man is very very clever in his own estimation but he's got a long way to go he makes one step forward and two back and he makes another half step forward another three back as far as I can see especially in recent days in our land and nation for we're sliding rapidly toward the dark ages in this country

I don't want to get on to that it's another subject but my dear friends he performeth the thing that is appointed for me he is in one mind who can turn him he performeth the thing that is appointed for me yes we come to the appointments of God and how often we have to come back there the appointments of God all things are ordered according to his eternal covenant for his people nothing is left to chance my life's minutest circumstance is subject to God's eye sometimes he allows like the little child that will play with the fire a mother has said twenty times don't it'll burn but one day the child gets a little burn oh that makes him jump and that teaches him that that's dangerous to touch the fire and yet mother has told him all these times not to touch the fire because it burns a little burn makes the child learn not to touch the fire and my dear friends thinking along the same line of thought

I humbly believe that we being stiff neck and rebellious people I include myself the Lord puts forth his hand and he allows us to come into a measure of trouble always tempered in his mercy to teach us things that otherwise we would not learn would not learn we are rebellious I said rebellious rebellious thou hast been rebellious thou art still but since in love I took thee in my promise I fulfilled that's the love of Christ that's the love of the prodigal's father isn't it the returning prodigal's father yes even for the rebellious he is merciful he brings them into trouble to make them call upon him to deliver them and friends that's what it's all about you know and the more I look at my own wicked heart and the more I realize that I have to be kept in line otherwise

[ 26 : 00 ] I should stray to my own soul's destruction because I've got a wicked heart that I inherited from my first father Adam but all that we need the cleansing precious blood of the lamb to cleanse from all that sin and to help us in that battle of grace that battle betwixt the old man of sin and the new man of grace and I have a feeling that several of you know quite a bit about it in the battle of life you know friends I can't find anywhere in scripture and if you do perhaps you let me know where it is where we have anything to indicate that we're going to be freed from that battle this side of the grave there will be something to keep us down something to battle with satan over betwixt that new man of grace and the old man of sin and friends what a mercy it is if you know what I'm speaking about and these are not just idle words to you if you know what that battle is if you know something about that inward battle that struggle against sin and that despondency which you feel at times when you have to come with the emriter at the end of the day and say the more I strove against sin's power

I sinned and stumbled but the more well don't stop there friend don't stop there the end of emriter goes on doesn't he till late I heard my saviour say come hither soul I am the way Job's God would support him yes he is of one mind and who can turn him what his soul desireth even that he doeth because he's almighty nothing can stop God he created the universe created every living being in it he knows what makes us tick can I put it that way he knows our inmost thoughts nothing can be hid from him he knows our motives he knows our thoughts but dear friends remember this he remembers that we are dust he remembers that we're dust and you think you remember that occasion which was made particularly sweet to me as we came to the Lord's supper on one occasion and that was that the dear

Lord Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane when he said he came back and found Peter and the disciples asleep and he said what could you not watch with me one hour watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation then what did he say the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak and in the midst of the depth of the agony of the Lord in the sorrow of his own soul at that poignant time in his soul's experience before his God bearing the weight and the sin of his church he remembered that they were dust he remembered that the spirit was willing and the flesh is weak and that is the merciful God that the Lord has given to his people the merciful son of God one God father son and holy spirit blessed trinity one God one purpose the salvation of his soul of the souls of his people one purpose the sole salvation of every covenant member of the covenant of grace to be saved by grace through that sin atoning sacrifice three persons one covenant of grace one purpose the salvation of the souls of his people dear friends and all the honour and glory and praise shall be to his great and to his holy name he is in one mind and who can turn him now friends there is a blessed comfort here isn't there can you see it he is in one mind who can turn him yes Satan tries to turn the work of

God he won't he cannot he does not have the power can I remind you of that defeat which Satan suffered in the 40 days in the wilderness when he tempted the Lord and he went away a defeated foe because the Lord had no sin in him he had nothing to work on friends it was a sinless son of God he was trying to tempt to sin and it was an impossibility which he undertook to do and he had to retire a defeated foe and God is in one mind and who can turn him he has decreed that there will be a number which the Father has given him who shall be saved not might be they will be saved they're elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father and they will be brought through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit and the precious redeeming blood of the Lamb unto salvation eternally he's in one mind that's his mind he doesn't change his mind friends have you ever gone along and had a conversation with somebody about some mundane matter and they've decided they're going to do this and to your utter amazement two days later you see they've done something different well that's human nature altogether isn't it but God is of one mind he's working out his eternal purposes his appointments friends are being worked out they're worked out through the word of God we see the appointments fulfilled of the prophecies do we not

I often think how wonderful it is that we have the whole word of God because we see the prophecies foretelling the Lord's coming the Lord Jesus Christ the Messiah in the old dispensation we see the foreshadowings in the ceremonial law and in all that pertained to the temple which was foreshadowing that finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ then we have the record of his birth the fulfilling of those prophecies and we have the fulfillment of them in his ministry the blind man could see and the lame man could leap and so we saw in the physical outworking of that and the truth of it in the Lord's day through his miracles and then we find that the fulfillment of the prophecies that he should lay down his life for his church redeem his people the lamb of God which was shown as I said this morning I believe to

[ 32 : 46 ] Abraham yes my son God will supply himself a lamb he is in one mind one mind for the blessedness and the salvation of his church and one mind for the punishment of the wicked both ways friends sure and what his soul desires even that he doeth there is no real illustration of the power of God that we can give before our to aid our understanding but it's a little bit like trying to tie a cart horse to a little pram and as if that would slow the cart horse up in any way he'd have plenty of power to go wherever he wanted to with that on and not notice it and it's a little bit like that God has almighty power and man's little hindrances and Satan's hindrances are as nothing to him I like to think of that word we read in in I was gone from the mind regarding skipping over the mountains we read there that he cometh skipping over the mountains the mountains of our sin he rises over them there is nothing to him he comes to his church over all the mountain of our sin and then they're cast into the sea behind his back and he remembers no more the sins of his church all friends are your sins there are mine that's the important thing isn't it he is in one mind who can turn him what his soul desireth even that he doeth for he performeth the thing that is appointed for me he knows each one's case and he is another comfort friends isn't it you might think oh well it's alright for him to stand up there speaking but he don't know exactly what's going on in my heart in my mind he doesn't know what a sinner I feel to be true I don't

I absolutely agree with you I don't know what how you feel but I know how I feel and I know how on record we have saints of God left on record as how they feel their sin and feel their unworthiness and and they're appointed to be convicted of their sin that which he for he performeth the thing that is appointed for me it's his performance it's his work dear friends and we are the clay in the potter's hand and what a mercy that is he will make with us what he has appointed for us and you know you dear young children and you who perhaps are studying for exams and taking exams my heart goes out to you have much to do and much responsibility to try and pass those exams haven't you but you know the Lord if you lay the matter before him will give you the ability to pass whatever exams you need to pass for his will for you for this life's journey I feel quite convinced and I think I can speak from experience that the Lord will give us as much success as it's good for us to have and that it's in his appointments to be used to his honour and glory and if the Lord has another way than the way you desire to go it'll be a better way for you you see I remember if you're I shouldn't think I've told you this before but my old pastor Mr. Herbert Dawson he was caught by grace early in life in his teens and he had this pleasant picture he used to say hung on the wall of his mind and it was that he would like to own his own printing shop works and print nothing only the best literature which was a good desire wasn't it we've got to say it was a good desire a wholesome desire for a career and so he was able to start his training at Farncombe's printing works this was must have been the beginning of the century early part of the century in the early days and but he contracted lead poisoning from the lead that was then used in much greater quantity than it is today in the print and so he could not continue in that career but what a blessing that was now we can I can say personally what a blessing that was the Lord would have him to be pastor for 50 years and preach on Zion's walls and what a blessing he was made now the



Lord attended his ministry with the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven souls were saved called by grace he that was a better work than the Lord had for him to do than printing it or good as it was to print good good literature what a good ambition it was but the Lord had something else for him and he said his picture fell off the nail he said and crashed to the floor and broke and so that he was then made submissive to the work of the Lord and the Lord opened up the way for him and so look back and as I say for three generations can witness that that was the best thing for him for the church for him in God's appointments yes he proved that this to be true that the thing that is appointed for me and many such things there are with him not just the major things in life are his appointments the minor things as we look on them are his appointments many things you know we think not too much of at the time and yet we find in a little while there they've taught us something that we need to know for another responsibility in life which we didn't know we got to fulfill at the time and yet the Lord has been bringing us along and teaching us these things that he need that we should need when his appointments are fulfilled what a blessing it is dear friends if we're given faith to rest in his will to know that nothing can turn his will to be submissive to his will for us to seek his leading and guiding in the pathway which lays before us and you'll prove at length dear friends that his way is the best way well Job did didn't he now I could go on a lot longer but I ought not to because the time is nearly gone but you see when we come to the end of Job's life we read that the Lord restored unto Job double in all things he had the fairest daughters in the land and so you see how God even in this life is faithful to his people

David can I recall the word in David said I once was young but now am old and I have not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread what a God he's made these promises friends cast your care upon him prove him he's faithful to his promises ask the apostles ask the prophets ask the word of God you'll find over and over again that the faithfulness of God in all things comes to the top of everything and friends eternity won't be long enough to praise him enough for saving his people from their sins and dear old Job I feel for Job what he went through and yet there I wonder now whether he can look back as it were and realize the mercy of God to the church down through the ages all because the Lord brought him through this contest between

God and Satan and proved to Job and proved to the church ever since that my grace is sufficient for thee God can give us grace and faith sufficient for our day may we be kept faithful looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith and we have to pray I have to pray day by day Lord increase my faith.

[ 41 : 32 ] Amen Thank you.