**Sermon Outline**

**Title:** Love and Serve God Because He is Worthy!

**Passage:** Job 1:13-2:10 (Read Job 1:13-20)

**Big Idea**

We worship and serve God, not because he blesses us, but because he is worthy.

**Introduction**

Transactional relationships are a key part of how our society functions. If we are not careful, we can begin to think of our relationship with God in these same transactional terms.

**“Does Job fear God for nothing?” Job 1:9-10**

**9**Satan answered the Lord, “Does Job fear God for nothing? **10**Haven’t you placed a hedge around him, his household, and everything he owns? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. **11**But stretch out your hand and strike everything he owns, and he will surely curse you to your face.”

1.The accusation Against Job was that his serving God could be reduced to a transactional relationship: Job is only faithful to God because God blesses and protects Job.

According to the accuser, if God would but remove the protection and take away the blessings, Job would turn his back on God.

2. What followed were two rounds of this challenge by the accuser to God. The first round, which we just read in chapter one, resulted in the tragic loss of Job’s children, his wealth, and his servants. The second round, found in chapter two, included the loss of his health and physical comfort.

**Beware a Transactional Approach to God!**

Do we serve God for nothing? Have we reduced our relationship with God to a series of transactions where we hold up our end of the deal and expect God to hold up his end? Do we expect God to reward our faithfulness with blessing and protection? Do we expect God to answer our prayers because we have avoided sin or participated in religious rituals or done good deeds for others? Do we live as if we have earned a place of protection because of the good we have done or the righteous way we live? In short, do we serve God because he blesses us?

**Examples of Transactional Approaches to God**

1. **Bargaining with God**: In bargaining with God, the individual abandons any pretense of serving God when life is good but feels that they keep God on the hook by claiming to believe in God even while rejecting biblical understandings of both God and belief. Then, when the individual faces difficulty or tragedy or an insurmountable challenge, they can call on God for help, feeling that he is bound by this superficial relationship and he must help them.

2. The **Prosperity ‘Gospel’**: at its core, the prosperity Gospel claims that it is always God’s plan for believers to live in financial success, to be healthy, and to achieve personal victory. All it takes is faith, prayer, and giving money to the church or the religious leader. Then one can expect God to act on your behalf.

3. The **Word of Faith movement** is closely related to the prosperity gospel. In this version, one can make bold claims on the promises from Scripture, often ignoring their context, and simply speak a new reality into existence. Faith plus boldness plus the power of the spoken word bind God into delivering your desires.

4. There are many groups and individuals who hold to a **Works-based Salvation**. This is a transactional approach to God in which God has set a certain standard for religious works or holy behavior or avoiding sin and for those who achieve that standard, salvation is the reward.

**Dennis Prager** wrote in his book Think a Second Time

**I have come to realize that many religious people… believe that they should be able to avoid the calamities that afflict the less pious. They believe, in effect, that they can make a deal with God — ‘I’ll do what You want so that You do what I want.’**

**Have you ever had any of the following thoughts?**

- If I please God by doing the right things or avoiding sin, then God will bless me.

-I prayed for God to heal me or someone I love but healing did not come. Therefore, God must not love me or I must have done something wrong.

-This terrible tragedy has happened in my family and now I don’t think I want to serve God and I’m not even sure that I believe in him anymore.

-As I near death, I fear that I have not done enough good things to be able to enter heaven.

**A Transactional Approach to God is Deadly to True Faith.**

It produces a superficial, quasi-faith built on a shifting weak foundation rather than on the solid foundation of God’s truth. When tragedy strikes or life gets hard, this kind of faith will crack and crumble.

Where genuine faith focuses on God and his worthiness, this is a self-centered faith that indulges wrong understandings of God and his purposes. Furthermore, this approach to God entices the heart to treasure and pursue safety, comfort, success, and health instead of God.

This was the accusation that was being leveled against Job. That it was not God that Job loved but the blessings that God provided. That he didn’t truly fear God but feared the removal of God’s protection over his life.

**Is it wrong to draw a connection between serving God and receiving blessings?**

The Bible repeatedly makes it clear that to live in alignment with God’s design is the best way to live. The result of such living brings blessings an overwhelming majority of the time. Conversely, to live in active rebellion against God’s design brings negative consequences most of the time as well. We read in

**Proverbs 3:9-10**

**9**Honor the Lord with your possessions
and with the first produce of your entire harvest;
**10**then your barns will be completely filled,
and your vats will overflow with new wine.

**Psalm 145:18-20**

**18**The Lord is near all who call out to him,
all who call out to him with integrity.
**19**He fulfills the desires of those who fear him;
he hears their cry for help and saves them.
**20**The Lord guards all those who love him,
but he destroys all the wicked.

**Psalm 103:17-18**

**17**But from eternity to eternity
the Lord’s faithful love is toward those who fear him,
and his righteousness toward the grandchildren
**18**of those who keep his covenant,
who remember to observe his precepts.

**The Retribution Principle**

These verses and other point to a general truth about how God rules the created order. In general, God blesses those who live according to his expressed design. However, this principle has its limits and does not encapsulate all of God’s working or his purposes. It is easy to take this principle and give it too much weight and even build an entire theological system around it. In Israel, it became common to believe that if good things happened to someone, it meant that they were pleasing to God and if bad things befell someone, they had angered God. This belief was apparent in John 9 when Jesus and his disciples encountered a man born blind. Jesus used that instance to challenge this wrong belief.

**Who sinned?** **John 9:1-3**

As he was passing by, he saw a man blind from birth. **2**His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

**3**“Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” Jesus answered. “This came about so that God’s works might be displayed in him. (Jesus healed him.)

**The Retribution Principle Undermined**

1. In Psalm 73, there is a lengthy description of how the wicked were becoming fat with the wealth gained by violence.

This led them to arrogantly say, “God does not even see what we are doing!” And it caused the author of that Psalm to question his own faith in God saying,

**Psalm 73:13-14**

Did I purify my heart
and wash my hands in innocence for nothing?
For I am afflicted all day long
and punished every morning.

2. We can also look for an example in the life of the patriarch, Joseph. He was faithful to God and yet suffered years of injustice and a lifetime of separation from his family and his homeland.

3. And then, of course, we have Job’s terrible suffering as he lost his children, his wealth, his comfort, and his health.

**A More Complex Truth**

God generally blesses those who love him, but sometimes asks his people to walk through very difficult circumstances.

**Job’s Response to Suffering exposes his Belief**

**After the first wave of loss: Job 1:20-21**

**20**Then Job stood up, tore his robe, and shaved his head. He fell to the ground and worshiped, **21**saying:

Naked I came from my mother’s womb,
and naked I will leave this life.[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=job+1&version=CSB#fen-CSB-12891c)]
The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away.
Blessed be the name of the Lord**. Job 1:20-21**

**Then, after he was afflicted with a painful disease: Job 2:9-10**

**9**His wife said to him, “Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!”

**10**“You speak as a foolish woman speaks,” he told her. “Should we accept only good from God and not adversity?” Throughout all this Job did not sin in what he said.[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job%202&version=CSB#fen-CSB-12902a)]

God is worthy of our worship in our prosperity and God is worthy of our worship in our suffering. Nothing that could happen to Job could change the fact that God is worthy! And because God is worthy, Job could trust God and follow him down any path, no matter how difficult. Whether the Lord gives or takes away, whether God is giving good things or adversity, Job was willing to follow because God is worthy!

**Bringing our Hearts into Alignment**

1. Can we say the same thing? Can we say that we trust God and will follow him no matter what path he leads us down? Do we believe that God is worthy of our prosperity and our suffering?

2. “Is the story of my life primarily about me or is the story of my life primarily about God?”

3. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught that we are each seeking a treasure. He said, **“where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” “Store up for yourself treasures in heaven.”** **Matthew 6:20 and 21**

God is our greatest treasure! When we treasure Him above all else, we can lose everything and still have inestimable wealth.

**Gospel Connection**

We have some advantages that Job did not have when it comes to trusting God. While Job lived in a time of no covenant and the original audience of the book of Job lived under the Old Covenant, we live now in the time of the New Covenant of Jesus. When we put our faith in Jesus, we are brought into a relationship with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We have God indwelling us and promising to walk with us no matter what we face. Jesus will never leave us or forsake us and the Spirit will guide us and comfort us and strengthen us to face what lies ahead. Whatever path is laid out for us to walk, if we have put our faith in Jesus, we do not walk it alone!

Are you trusting in Jesus as your savior? If you have yet to believe in Jesus, today can be the day that you believe and are made new. Confess your sin, put your faith in Jesus, and follow him beginning right now.

**Action Steps**

1. Probe your heart by asking questions and giving honest answers: Are you living for yourself or for God? What have you seen in your heart when you have face hardship? Have you been offended when God hasn’t answered your prayers the way you wish? How would you respond if you knew that God was leading you down a path of profound suffering?

2. Make God your treasure, not the gifts he gives. When you enjoy the blessings of God, make sure to distinguish in your heart that the giver is of infinite more value than the gift. Enjoy the blessings of God as an act of worship of the One who blesses.

3. Fathers and Mothers: We get to model this way of thinking and living for our children. How we face struggle and adversity will show our daughters and our sons that God is the One we seek and that we trust Him and Worship Him because He is worthy!

Talk to your children about disappointments and suffering and loss in a way that highlights God’s worthiness.

Job 1:13-20

**13**One day when Job’s sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house, **14**a messenger came to Job and reported, “While the oxen were plowing and the donkeys grazing nearby, **15**the Sabeans swooped down and took them away. They struck down the servants with the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you!”

**16**He was still speaking when another messenger came and reported, “God’s fire fell from heaven. It burned the sheep and the servants and devoured them, and I alone have escaped to tell you!”

**17**That messenger was still speaking when yet another came and reported, “The Chaldeans formed three bands, made a raid on the camels, and took them away. They struck down the servants with the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you!”

**18**He was still speaking when another messenger came and reported, “Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house. **19**Suddenly a powerful wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on the young people so that they died, and I alone have escaped to tell you!”

**20**Then Job stood up, tore his robe, and shaved his head. He fell to the ground and worshiped, **21**saying:

Naked I came from my mother’s womb,
and naked I will leave this life.[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job+1&version=CSB#fen-CSB-12891c)]
The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away.
Blessed be the name of the Lord.

**22**Throughout all this Job did not sin or blame God for anything.[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job+1&version=CSB#fen-CSB-12892d)]

Benediction

Revelation 5:12-14

**12**They said with a loud voice,

Worthy is the Lamb who was slaughtered
to receive power and riches
and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and blessing!

**13**I heard every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth, on the sea, and everything in them say,

Blessing and honor and glory and power
be to the one seated on the throne,
and to the Lamb, forever and ever!

**14**The four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Sermon Description

Job is tested to see if he loves and serves God only because God blesses and protects Job. As the blessings and protection are removed, we see that Job continues to worship God because God is worthy independent of the blessings.

Discussion Questions

1. Is it possible to have a disinterested righteousness? (Spiritual allegiance that does not depend on external circumstances; True devotion to God without thought of reward and punishment)

2. How have you seen the “prosperity gospel” or other transactional approaches to God at work in others or in yourself?

3. Why is it dangerous to become over-focused on the benefits of a relationship with God?

4. Compare Job’s response in today’s passage to Moses’ in Genesis 22. Imagining yourself in those situations, how would your devotion to God compare?

5. Has there been a time of loss or difficulty that has helped you refocus on the Lord because he is worthy independent of his blessings?

Prayer Points

1. Pray for God to protect his people from the dangerous message of the “prosperity gospel” and other similar misleading falsehoods.

2. Pray that God will help you treasure him above all other things. Pray this for your church family as well.

3. Pray that our witness to Jesus will communicate the true Gospel that leads to faith and life.

More Resources

[Article](https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/5-errors-of-the-prosperity-gospel/) on the 5 Errors of the Prosperity Gospel by David W. Jones

[Video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jLRue4nwJaA) Why I Abominate the Prosperity ‘Gospel’ by John Piper

[Video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3wd4oOO9CA) Dr. John Walton talks about the Retribution Principle