

# Job 1

Sunday 9/28/2003

I would like you to open your Bibles to the book of Job this morning. If you do not have a Bible here this morning, John is coming around. We have a Bible for you. You are welcome to keep it as a gift from us. Also, for our kids, if you want to go, we have a little room over here for your kids. If your kids want to stay and listen to the preaching, that is fine too. It is up to you. We do not force anybody to do anything. A lot of kids like to listen to the preaching or stay with their parents, but some of the kids want to go in, so that is fine. Do whatever you feel comfortable with doing. If you need a Bible, John is right here; he has them. If you need one, just raise your hand and we will give you one. You can keep it, as I said, or give it back to us, whatever, if you just forgot yours today. We want you to have a copy of the Word of God because everything we do around here is based on the Word of God.

Now, I told you to turn to the book of Job this morning. That is a little different from where we have been, because we have been studying the book of Nehemiah. If you remember, for the last couple of weeks or the last couple of months really, we have been dealing with the book of Nehemiah, looking at the rebuilding of the gates, showing you how that inspirational picture is exactly how you build a church. Jerusalem, the gates all being a picture of, in the Old Testament, the program of God, the mission of God, the ministry of God, built around the city of God. We know in the New Testament that the mission of God is the church, and everything we do is built around that. This is the place where we train men and women to have a relationship with God so that we can do the work and the ministry of God through the local church.

We talked about a lot of good things, and we talked about the different gates; we talked about all the different aspects of it. We came to the point last week where we began a study on the reality of all of this. We saw the nation of Israel, how God had brought them back, that they had the man in the right place for the right time to do the work of God, and all the men that were with him and the women that were with him. He began to rebuild those walls and put those things back together. Then we saw the reality set in: the opposition. Some people are not happy with the fact that you have decided that you are going to do what the Lord wants you to do in your life.

In fact, we talked about in Nehemiah 2, 3, and 4 last week, we saw how all history is nothing more than God moving to do what He wants to do and the devil moving in opposition to that. We talked about the fact that we have people in this building, in this room this morning, that really want to do what is right. Some of you are older Christians that have been around for a while; some of you are younger Christians that maybe just got saved, or you just decided that you found a place where you could really learn the Bible and you want to be and do what God wants you to do. All of that comes down to the fact that you need to understand opposition. Opposition is going to come. I told you last week, the key to understanding and dealing with it is understanding it. When you realize that opposition is just a normal part of your spiritual growth, it is something that we all go through. It helps you deal with it in a much better way.

## I. Introduction to Job and the Nature of Opposition

## II. Three Reasons for Opposition

Now, I want to talk to you this morning about that aspect of it. I want to take it a step further. I want to talk to you about how this great principle is such an incredible principle that we need to learn. We are going to look again behind the scenes today, and we are going to understand opposition in an even better way. Last week, we looked at opposition outwardly. We talked about the fact that you are going to have opposition, that opposition is going to come. Today, we are going to look at it from the inside. We are going to go behind the scenes again, and we are going to look at the opposition that is going to come into your life and my life.

Let me just say this at the beginning, just so you have an understanding: Opposition comes for three reasons in our lives.

1. The first reason we get opposition or we have problems is because of unconfessed sin.

This is something that everybody needs to understand. The Bible says that there is a process by which we stay in fellowship with God. We are all sinners. The Bible says that every one of us is going to sin, and when we sin, if we are saved, we break our fellowship with God. It does not mean you are going to die and go to hell. Once you are saved, you are eternally saved; there is no question about that. But it does mean that fellowship is broken, that you cannot have the power of God in your life the way God would want you to have it. So, for your life and my life, the key is to keep short accounts with God, as Martin Luther said. You want to come to the place where you confess your sin. You keep yourself to the place where sin is confessed. You do something wrong, you know that it is wrong, you stop at that moment and tell God you were wrong and ask God to forgive you. The Bible says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." That is not talking about getting saved; that is talking about after you are saved and in your daily walk with God. Things in this life are going to come up against us, and we are going to have opposition. Sometimes God will bring things into our lives to focus us on the fact that we have not confessed to God what we need to. Sometimes we do things that are wrong, and they build up for a while, and you wonder why you cannot get ahead, why everything is against you. The reason it is is because unconfessed sin will bring opposition into your life. That is the first reason.

2. The second reason opposition comes is just because you are stupid.

Now, we do not have anybody like that, and if we did, I would tell you. I would not tell you who they are, but I would say we have got a few like that. In fact, we may have one coming in a couple of weeks, but as it stands right now, we are in good shape. But let me tell you what I mean by stupid. Someone said, "Well, that is not nice to say stupid." Okay, dumb, anyway. In other words, they cause their own problems. I have met people all my life that are saved people, but they are immature people, and what they do is do stupid things. They will go at work and they will try to be a witness. I had a guy years ago that was in my ministry, and I got a call from his boss one day. His boss said, "Reverend Alexander, we have got so-and-so that is working for us, and I do not know what to do. I need your help." I said, "Well, what is the problem?" He says, "Well, so-and-so, he is doing some things that we just cannot tell him. We do not want to fire him, but we do not know what to do." I said, "Well, what is

he doing?" "Well," he says, "at lunchtime, some of the guys sit around and want to play cards." He says, "I know that as a Christian, you probably do not think cards are good to play, and if they are wrong and gambling is sin and all that. But this guy, on their lunch hour, he goes over and rips the cards off the table and throws them in a trash can and then gives tracts to everybody." He says, "Everybody, he is going to get beat up. I do not know what to do."

My first inclination was to say, "Let him get beat up." The same guy was coming in to see me, telling me how he was persecuted at work because he was taking a stand for the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, that is stupidity. That is not how you do it. I think you ought to be a witness at work, but some of your places where you work, maybe they will tell you, "You cannot preach, you cannot pass out tracts. You cannot even have any religious verses on your cubicle or on your wall or whatever. You cannot say a word." Some of you find yourself in that situation. Then you ask yourself, "How do I witness?"

Let me tell you something: I learned a long time ago that witnessing has nothing to do with saying anything. Witnessing has to do with how you live your life. When you live your life the way God wants you to do, and you live a godly life in front of people, you will not have to go to anybody to say, "Here is how to get saved." People will come to you and say, "What is the difference?" God will give you the opportunity. We live in a society that we do not want to live a godly life. We do not want to pay the price in front of our people, but we want to take a stand for God. So we do dumb things, tearing up the cards, like going up and doing something really stupid at work or wherever the case may be, and people looking at you, and they say, "If that is Christianity, I do not want any of it." You know what people ought to say? They ought to look at your life and my life, and they say, "If that is Christianity, I want a part of that. I want to see what that person has." That is the society we live in.

3. Opposition comes because of the fact that you are doing what is right.

When opposition comes in my life, the first thing I do is go through that checklist. This is a good thing for everybody. The first thing I do is go out and say, "Lord, is there any unconfessed sin in my life? Is there anything that I did that I forgot or anything that I should not have done?" Lord, I check that first. Then the second thing I ask myself is the same thing I just said: "God, have I been stupid someplace?" I could do stupid things. I make, sometime I am going to publish the book. I am going to be a best seller: "All the Stupid Things I Ever Did in My Life." When you write your book, we will compare notes, and there will probably be a lot of the same things. We all do dumb things. I check that; I say, "Lord, have I done something dumb? Have I done something stupid?" Then the next thing, if that is all cleared out, then the next thing I say, "Okay, Lord, then I am going through this because I am doing what is right." That is what I want to talk to you about this morning.

I do not believe there is anybody in here at all that does anything just because you are stupid. I do not believe that. Now, you may have some unconfessed sin in your life, and you may have some problems in your life. I do not know, but those are easy things to take care of; just get right with God. But I am sure of this: I know that there are some young couples in here. I know that there are some singles in here. I know there are some of you older people in here that have been around for a while. I know there are a bunch of people in here that want to do what is right. I know the minute, as I said last week, the moment you begin to say to God, "I am going to do what is right," opposition is going to come because the devil does not want you to do what is

right. We talked about it last week: God has a plan for your life, and the devil wants to stop that plan, and everything the devil can do, he will do.

### III. Job's Adversity: A Case Study

Now, I came to the book of Job today because there is one great truth that you have to learn. There is one great truth. I talked about us understanding opposition. This is what I mean: there are some things you have to understand as a young Christian. There are some things you have to remember as an old Christian. The book of Job is probably one of my favorite books of the Bible. I know the book of Job is the most scientific book in the Bible, along with the book of Ecclesiastes, but I do not like it for that so much; it is the practicality of the book of Job. Job gets right down where I live, and Job tells me one of the most fundamental things I, as a child of God, need to understand in the day and age that I live.

*Job 1:1-12*

*There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.*

*And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters.*

*His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east.*

*And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them.*

*And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.*

*Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.*

*And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.*

*And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?*

*Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?*

*Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.*

*But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.*

*And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.*

Now there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house. And there came a messenger unto Job and said, "The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them. And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away. Yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword. I only have escaped alone to tell thee." While he was yet speaking, there came also another and said, "The fire of God has fallen from heaven, and it has burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them. And I only am escaped alone to tell thee." While he was yet speaking, there came also another and said, "The Chaldeans made out three bands and fell upon the camels and have carried them away. Yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword. And I only am escaped alone to tell thee." And while he was yet speaking, there came also another and said, "Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house. And behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are all dead. And I only am escaped alone to tell thee."

*Job 1:20-22*

*Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped,*

*And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.*

*In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.*

Now, I will tell you, Job has always been a unique individual for me because of some incredible things. There is one thing that we have to see today. As I said, I tell you this every week: there is one thing in my messages that if you do not get anything else, I hope you do. But if you do not get anything else, get this one thing. You can forget everything else. I do not want you to, and I want you to get several things. But if you do not have that capacity, just get this one. This is very important; this is it. If you just get this, this will help you immensely.

We look at the book of Job, and we see here in chapter one, some things take place. I do not know if you realize it or not, but Job and these events, and in chapter two, the devil comes before the Lord again, and they have another controversy about Job. This time he gets an incurable disease. To save time reading all that, I will just tell you that. But here is the bottom line: in seven days, this whole course takes seven days. In seven days' time, Job loses what you and I as a child of God will never lose in our lifetime.

Now, I know there are some tragedies today. I read the paper all the time, and I see some little baby dying or some little kid getting killed, and what a tragedy. One of our brave men or women fighting in Iraq, what a tragedy. I see these things, and I do not want to minimize that. Those are tragedies. Some of you have lost loved ones. I do not want to minimize that. Those are tragedies. But I do not know of anybody in my life that I have ever met that in one week's time lost what

Job lost. I do not know anybody. I do not know anybody that went through what he went through and lost what he lost.

First of all, he faces a complete, total financial disaster. All of a sudden, the Bible says he is one of the richest men of the East. He has all kinds of stuff. God has richly blessed him. God has given him all kinds of things. The Bible says that he is a man that loves God, he fears God, he has all the right things in the right places, and as you can see, he is a perfect picture of what your life and my life should be. But in one week's time, he loses all of his substance. In Job 1:13-15, the oxen, his asses, and all of the servants that watch over them are gone. In Job 1:16, his sheep and the servants that watch over them are gone. In Job 1:17, the camels and all the servants are gone. He loses all of that. Financially, he came home, or they came to him and said, "You are wiped out. You do not have anything. You do not have anything."

Now, financial disaster is a tough thing. In a day and age that we live in, with the Enron scandal and the economy the way that it is, there have been lots of people that have lost financially. But I do not know of anybody. I never read in Forbes, Newsweek, Time Magazine, anybody that lost in one week financially what Job lost. If that was not enough, right on top of the financial disaster, here comes the personal disaster. I mean, I do not know how many times I have seen on the news where a house burned down and they lost everything. The people are standing there in front of Channel Nine or Channel Four or Channel Five, and they are interviewing them. You know what they say? They say, "We lost everything, but that can be replaced. We are all safe." Well, Job did not only say that for a moment. Maybe the thought began to flee through his mind, "Well, I lost everything, but I still got my family." That thought no more went through his mind than somebody ran in and said, "Job, all of your family is dead. All of your family is dead. Your sons, they were eating and drinking, and I do not know what happened, but everybody in your family is dead except your wife." As I read on a little bit later, it would have been nice if she would have died. Here is his helpmeet. There is something to this. If you ever see what she said, she says to him, "Curse God and die." That is a nice thing for your helpmeet to say.

I mean, you are sick in bed, going through all this stuff, and she comes in. You want comfort. You want breakfast in bed, somebody to swab your fevered brow, or whatever. Here she comes in with a little smile on her face and nice things. You say to her, "Honey, how do you feel?" And her words out of her mouth are, "Curse God and die." That always struck me as strange because when the devil showed up to God, he made a statement like, "If you take all that he has, he will curse you to his face." Now, where did his wife get that? The devil was working on her. His family dies, his wife turns against him.

Then on top of that, the doctor calls on the phone. I do not know if he had a phone left. The doctor gets in touch with him and says, "You have got a terminal, incurable, terrible disease that is going to rock your body with sores and boils and pus." You find Job is so bad that he is sitting out on an ash heap. He does not even have a bedroom anymore. He does not even have a house anymore. He is sitting out on an ash heap with a piece of pottery, scraping the boils. Then on top of all of that, in chapter four, his three friends show up. Dr. Fine, Dr. Howard, Dr. Fine.

Now, friends, when you are sick, comfort you. I would hope so. I mean, when we have somebody sick here, we take care of them. We pray for Jan. When little Kelly went through her deal, we prayed for her, stood by her. Anybody that goes through anything, that is what the church is all about. Well, his three friends show up, and you know what? Nobody likes friends. A lot of people around, bad choice of words, everybody likes friends, but nobody likes a lot of people around when you do not feel good. You just do not feel good. I mean, you do not look good. You are kind of embarrassed about it. You do not feel good. You do not want people looking at you when you are like, we like to be our best. You are always afraid you are going to throw up on them or something or in front of them. It is just a bad deal. So you want them to, when I go visit somebody who is really sick, I am in, I say, I pray, and I am out. I mean, I go in there and say, "Hi, I am just here to pray for you. I just want you to know that we love you. I hope you get better. I hope the church is praying for you. If you need anything at all, I know you do not feel good." And I am backing out the door. "I know you do not feel good. I know you do not feel well. Call me. I love you. I am praying for you. Anything you need, I am there for you. I know you do not feel good. Just call me," and I am gone. Because you do not want to be there. I mean, when I am sick, I do not want a bunch of people poking around saying, "Oh, does this hurt? How do you feel down there?" Somebody down there, "Oh, let me read your chart here and see, oh, you are going to die." I do not need that.

Job's three friends show up. They did not encourage him at all. You know what they did? They said, "Hey, Job, you know why you are sick? You know why you lost all this? You know why God killed your kids? You know why God did this and God gave you this? Because you have got sin in your life." Now, it is tough because the Bible says that was not true. The Bible says he was an upright man. He feared God. He hated evil. He was giving sacrifices for his sons, just in case they would have sinned when they do not even know if they did sin. That is a pretty good father. He loves God. God has obviously blessed him because one of the marks of the blessings of God in the Old Testament was having a lot of wealth, and he seemingly has it all. Now his friends show up. There is nothing worse than when you are sick and you know you are right with God and you are trying to figure out what God is doing. What you do not need is somebody, in this case, three somebodies, coming up and pointing their finger and accusing you of sin when they have no idea what God is doing in your life.

He loses everything financially. He loses everything in a personal disaster that comes in his life. Then his wife turns against him. His three friends show up. He has got a terminal disease. He is sitting on an ash heap. He is in dire need. He is hurting.

## IV. The Great Truth: God is Enough

Yet I want you to understand this. Here comes the great truth.

### 4. Job has no Bible.

There is no Bible written in Job's time. He lives probably around Abraham's time. He does not have a copy of the Word of God like you got this morning. He does not have a Bible.

5. He does not have a church.

He does not have a bunch of people praying for him or a pastor to come in and check on him or people bringing him food or helping him. He does not have any of that. He has no pastor. There is no church in effect back here. There is no organized structure of God doing anything. Israel is not even a nation yet. He is not even in the fold of Israel. The Jews are a thought in the mind of God. Nobody understands that. He does not have a pastor. He cannot flip on a TV and hear the 700 Club. He has no Christian radio. He cannot get Clyde and Aramore to get his problems solved. He cannot get Swindoll. He cannot even get Rush Limbaugh. He cannot get anybody. He has no friends. He has no Christian counselor, no Christian psychologists, no Christian therapists. He has nothing that you and I have in the world today.

But you know what he does have? This is the point, man. What he does have is God. My point fundamentally is this: in your young Christian life, all you need is God. All you need is God. God is enough. If I believe that God wrote the book of Job for any reason, I believe He wrote it to Bob Alexander to tell me that here is a man that goes through in seven days what I will never go through in life. He has no Bible, has no church, has no pastor, has no friends, has no family, has lost everything, got a disease, sitting on an ash heap, and has nothing except the one thing that nobody can take away from you that you better spend some time building, and I want to help you, and that is a relationship with God. God is enough. God, when everything else leaves you, when everybody else leaves you, when everything else is gone, your relationship with God will always stay because He will never leave you. He will never leave you.

## V. Building a Relationship with God

I am telling you, you have to begin or you have to restart or you have to refurbish or you have to remember how to build and renew a relationship with God every day of your life. When I come through the Bible, I am going to give you a big broad picture of how to do that. When I read through the Bible, I read the Bible talks about there are only two men in the Bible that were God's friend. Only two men. Now, I ask myself, "You mean, and the man is Abraham. Abraham is one of them, and Moses is one of them." When I look at that, I think to myself, "Does that mean that David was not God's friend? That means Solomon was not God's friend?" I mean, in all the Bible, 31,171 verses, 1,189 chapters, in all of the Bible, there are only two men that the Bible says that were the friend of God or God's friend.

Now, what does that mean to me? If I am reading through that and I catch that, that tells me something. Do I think those are the only two men in the Bible that were God's friend? Certainly not. Was Job God's friend? Certainly he was. Was David God's friend? Absolutely. Are there lots of other men and women in the Bible who you could classify as God's friend? Certainly. Then why did God just say that about these two people? I will tell you why. If you want to learn the basics of being God's friend, of what it takes to be a friend of God, study the lives of these two men. Study what they went through. Study how they got to be the friend of God. Two of the greatest men in the Bible that you ever study that struggle with life just like you and I do, that have the exact same problems that you and I do, are those two men. When you find out how they

started at point A and got to point Z as the friend of God, you understand some basics about how to build a relationship with God to be His friend.

Now, only two men in the Bible, the Bible says, walked with God. One of them is Noah, the other one is Enoch. Now, you mean to tell me, God, that in all of the Bible, there are millions of characters in the Bible, there are only two men that walked with You? No. I believe there is a host of men and women in the Bible that walked with God. But if you want to learn the basics of walking with God, study the lives of those two men. Study the lives of the men that God articulates to show you the particular thing you want to learn. Remember that other thing I said about God is enough? That is the only thing you had to remember. Forget that. This is what you need to remember: God emphasizes men and women in the Bible at what they do to attain in God. God tells you one-liners about them that if you want to find out the basics of getting what they have got, that is how you do it. Study their lives.

David. God said about David at the end of his life or at the end of the Bible, He says, "David did what was right all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite." He says he is a man after God's own heart. Only man in the Bible just said that about. Now, is that the only man in the Bible that, no. But you want to study how to get to the jubmancy of Christ and screw up a few times but get there where David did? I mean, did you ever look at the things that David did that were wrong in the Bible? When he got there at the end of his life, God only had two things against him? Why? Because David has got a relationship with God that the average person in the Bible does not have, and no Christian just about today has, but I am telling you what, you can have it if you want it. You know how you learn? Study his life. Study his life. Study his life.

Building a relationship with God is so important because God is the only thing when all else fails. There may be a time in your life where you lose your Bible, where you lose your friends, where you do not have any church to go to, that you do not have a pastor, that you do not have any Christian friends. There may be a time in your life where all you have is God, and I am telling you right now, remembering that day, I hope it never comes, but if it does, remember God is enough. So the first thing I want you to see about all of this is I want you to see and understand that you have to have a relationship with God because the relationship with God is key. That is the thing that God impressed upon my mind this week. That is the thing, I talked to my wife about it the other night, we were driving someplace, and I was banging it back and forth with her, and we were talking about it, and I have talked to a few other people, and God has just impressed upon me with the couples that I have talked with and the people that are coming and the people that seemingly want to learn the Bible, and the bottom line is this: we have got to start at square one, and we have got to, in a sense of a young Christian or somebody that just wants to learn, we have got to teach you the basics, and for us that have been around for a while, we need to go back and renew the basics. Do not ever think for a moment, if you have been saved 10, 15, 20, 25 years, that you have arrived, because when that time comes, you will find yourself right where Job was.

So the first thing I want you to see is I want you to see and understand that a relationship with God is paramount. A relationship with God is absolutely paramount. Paramount, that means important. It means the absolutely essential thing in your life. A relationship with God. Years

ago, a lady brought her husband in to see me. He was saved as far as I can tell. Maybe he was not, I do not know. But this man was an old farmer; he was about 65 years old. I know his wife was saved. He may have been or may not have been. But he stands as a great example of what I am talking about. He had had a stroke. As a result of the stroke, he could not farm anymore, could not even work. He was relegated now to just basically sitting around the house all day. He was in deep depression. He was so bad off that they did not know what to do with him; they were afraid he was going to kill himself. I do not know whatever happened to her. I do not know if he did or he did not. I do not know; he never really came back to see me after a couple of times. But I deduced what the situation was straight out. Here was a man who all of his life trusted in his own strength. His ability to do, provide, farm better, work harder. All of his life he built himself thinking that he was invincible and he could do anything in life.

But you know what? There comes a time in your life and my life when that is not going to happen. There comes a time in your life when you are going to be flat on your back, and if your trust is not and your strength is not in Christ but in yourself, you are going to be deceived, and you are going to fall, and you are going to fail because what you trusted in to get you through has just let you down. If that man would have put his faith in Christ many, many years earlier and built a relationship with God, when he had the stroke, he would have realized that his real work with God was not in farming. His real work with God was not in his work ethic. His real work with God was not in all that he could do. His real work with God was the fact that he had a relationship with God that he could have flat on his back in a wheelchair or out working in a field. We put the wrong emphasis on the wrong things, and that is exactly what we do. We think because we are intelligent, and we are, and we have got money, and we do. We have got a great economy. We have got two or three cars in our parking lot, or at least two or one or whatever. We have got this, we have got good jobs, and we have got this, we have got a nice house, and we have got all the things that we need. Not everybody, but the majority of people do. We get thinking to the point where we think that we have got so much that we do not need God, and we start building our relationship with other things. Maybe that is what began to happen in Job's life. I do not know. I do not know.

## VI. God's Purpose in Adversity

But I do know this. Here is the next thing I want you to see, and the next thing you need to understand is where it comes from. If you would go back to Revelation 12:10, you do not have to turn to it. You can look it up later. In Revelation 12:10, you would find the demise of Satan. You would find there where the Bible catalogs Satan and brings him to an end. The Bible calls him the accuser of the brethren. What the devil does right now during the church age, the time that you and I live in, is what he has done all the way through the Bible. See, we think of the devil as someone who goes around tearing up stuff and messing up stuff, and the devil does not do that. The devil, first of all, just relies on our human nature to do most of it. He does have demonic cohorts, devils, demons, whatever you want to call them, that do his work and his bidding. But the devil, the Bible says, stands before, and you get an account of it in Job 1 and Job 2. What the devil does all through the Bible is he stands before the throne of God and he accuses the people of God. He makes fun of them before God exactly like he did Job. That is what he does.

Everything else that you see in this life that is demonic and everything else, the devil is not in direct control of. He is not orchestrating it. It is just the demonic hordes carrying out his orders and following his line of departure as far as what they are supposed to do. The devil is before, he tells you, he says, "God asks him, 'Where have you been?'" He says, "Well, I have been down on the earth and walking up to and fro and checking things out, checking things out."

Here is the thing that you have got to see. Look down here in Job 1:8. Maybe you missed this.

*Job 1:6*

*Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.*

*Job 1:7*

*And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.*

*He says, "I have been checking things out."*

*Job 1:8*

*And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job?*

Now the thing I want you to see is this: the devil did not bring Job's name up. God brought Job's name up. I want you to see that. God singled out Job for opposition. God brought his name up. The devil did not say, "Yeah, I have been down there watching Job." The devil just said, "Oh, I have been walking down on the earth, walking up to and fro, and checking things out." God said, "Have you considered my servant Job?" The devil said, "Yeah, I checked him out. He is not much." God says, "You know what? He loves Me. He has a relationship with Me." The devil says, "Well, why should not he?" Remember what I taught you last week? Everything is good. He has got everything he could want. Why would not he love You? Everybody loves God when everything is going good. "You take all that he has, and he will curse You to Your face, God." God said, "No, he will not." The devil says, "Yes, he will." He says, "Okay, take all that he has, but do not touch him." Next chapter, the devil comes back again. He gets permission to touch him, but that is not my point.

The point is this: God brought his name up. Sometimes God may bring your name up. This is part of understanding opposition because I am telling you, Job was ten times better after this affliction than he was before he went into it. He was stronger, closer. I mean, he was better after than before because you see, and here is what you have got to see: God had a message for Job. God had something that He wanted Job to see. Sometimes God will have something and a message that He wants you to see and get. Now, what did God do? God used the devil as a delivery boy. What do we do? We do not understand opposition. We do not know what is going on. We get so focused with the delivery boy, we do not get the message. I am telling you, we focus on the delivery boy because we do not understand opposition, and we lose what God has for us because God had something that He wanted Job to see and understand, and if Job would

get it, Job would come to the place where he would be better off than he ever was, even though the time you go through it is tough.

Adversity makes you strong. I do not know why Christians have become so effeminate. Christianity has become such a sissy-fied thing that we have lost the aspect that Paul talked about to young Timothy when he talked about the fact that you and I as Christians need to be soldiers for Jesus Christ. In fact, he said over there in 2 Timothy 2:3 that we were to:

*2 Timothy 2:3*

*Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*

If churches were more like Marine Corps boot camp than they were Sunday School social ice cream, hostess, Twinkie deals, we would be a lot better off. America has a great military power. The history of America has been, we never lost a war. We never lost a war because we had men and women who were trained and who had the courage and the intestinal fortitude to be strong. But the Marine Corps did not turn out Marines, the Army did not turn out Army, the Navy did not turn out the Navy, and the Air Force did not turn out the Air Force just by having nice little social events. They took them, stripped them down, and brought them back and built them exactly the way they wanted them to be, a machine of war who understood a oneness, a camaraderie, and the Marine Corps is separate for Dallas. It is all together one, always faithful, and they brought them together to endure hardness.

Well, in Christianity, God wants your training to make you just that way because doing a work for God. Let me tell you something. When I was a young man, and I was just probably, oh, in my early 18, 19 years of age, and I was contemplating all this, and I was at a Bible camp one place, I heard an old soldier of the cross preach a message one night on the great battles of his life. I heard him preach a thing that I did not understand it nor did I really believe it at the time. He said, "You know what?" He said, "If you are really going to serve God and you are going to turn your life over to God," he said, "the battle that you are going to get into is going to make all the battlefields of this world look like kids playing shooting marbles." He said, "I am not kidding you, son." He said, and he was talking to me, "You may not understand it, you may not even believe it, but if you are going to sell out and you are going to build your life the way God wants you to build it," he said, "if you go back and look at Vicksburg and Gettysburg and Châtellerault and the Battle of the Marne and Iwo Jima and Saipan and Okinawa and Normandy invasion," he says, "those battles are going to be like kids at a picnic compared to the battle you are going to get in when you get into a battle that deals with eternal matters and the souls of men." I did not believe him then. That was 40 years ago. I believe him today. I know what he is talking about.

## VII. The Church's Role in Spiritual Growth

As a pastor, as Christians in churches, it is a terrible thing when somebody first gets saved to come up and slap them on the back and say, "Hey, all your problems are over." Well, they are as far as eternity is concerned. That is where most churches leave it, truly. Because they are just interested in people getting saved, counting them. They can brag about them at the fellowship meetings and all the places they go, and it is kind of like a little rivalry between churches. So

they do not care. Somebody comes down and gets saved, they are glad. Somebody deals with them, they come down and make a profession of faith, try to get them baptized, try to do all the things, but you know what? Slap them on the back and say, "Bless God, everybody is happy, da-da-da-da-da. All this rejoicing in heaven, you know, that the so-and-so turned to God. We are all happy this morning. Oh, praise God, brother so-and-so, oh, your problems are over," slapping them on the back. Kid goes out, bam! Opposition knocks him flat. He does not even get out to the parking lot. The hellish hordes are waiting for him. He goes home and tells his dad, "Well, Dad, I got saved." "What? You got saved?" Throw beer bottles at him. Mom and Dad laugh at him. Brother and sisters think it is stupid. His girlfriend turns him out. His boyfriend runs away from her. Whatever the case, opposition. What do they do in a church? "Oh, boy, he is saying, oh, boy, we are happy." The kid is on his back.

I am telling you something. I will never tell you that. I will tell you this: you will not have to go through it by yourself. It is going to come, it is going to hit you. But you have got a group of people right here that love you, that understand opposition. You have got a pastor that understands opposition. That is why I tell you every week, and I will tell you, the day Jesus comes or I die, I will spend an hour a week with you in the Bible helping you. Why? Do I get paid per person? Do I get paid per hour? Why do I get paid per minute? No, because I understand that the biblical principles of the Word of God have to be put into your young Christian life. I am looking at building you up to be tough, to be strong, to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

I will tell you what, your goal ought to be as a child of God. Your goal ought to be as a child of God as you get to the place in your life where you are out on a limb of a very small tree, but a very tall tree. That limb is wavering in the wind, almost ready to crack. You are looking back at that tree, hoping it does not crack, and all of a sudden you see God sitting, standing there, looking at you with a smile on His face and a saw in His hand. You can enjoy that position, knowing that whatever comes, He has got a message for you. You are going to be stronger through it. You are going to be stronger through it. Adversity will come in your life, in my life, because God wants us to grow. God wants us to grow.

You know, I was reading a couple of weeks ago, I was coming through Daniel, and I was writing something down there, and I looked at Daniel. I got over there that Daniel got put in a lion's den. I thought to myself, "Wow, what a tough thing, man." I am reading down there, and I got kind of engrossed with the story, and it has been a while since I read it, so I went back and I just started the whole thing, and I started coming down through there, and Daniel, and that chapter, and I got reading down there, and I saw where they threw him down there, and the king was nervous all night long, and people were praying for Daniel, that God, that they tried to get him out, and all this stuff, and Daniel, they do not know what has happened to him. I looked at that thing, and I thought to myself, "Man, I will tell you what, would not have been a tragedy." We look at it and see Daniel being thrown in a lion's den, and we say, "Wow, what a terrible thing." You know what would have been a terrible thing? It would have been a terrible thing if somebody would have got him out. The king, he is walking back and forth, he is wondering if he is alive or not. I do not know why he just did not go down, look, he is the king, and all of his friends are over here

worried about it. You know what Daniel is doing? Daniel is over there getting the best night's sleep he ever had. I mean, he is better than Motel 6, man. I mean, he has got him a big old 1200 pound mama lion there with all them other lions around there, and they are all sitting down there, and they threw him. When everybody else threw him down, they were dead before they hit the bottom of the pit. They threw Daniel down there, boy. He is down there expecting to get killed, and about that time, the old lion just stands around, he looks around and he says, "Man, there are like nine or ten gigantic, I mean, it could rip me apart, what is going on?" About that time he looked over in the corner, and he is seeing somebody standing over there like that. He said, "Well, that is the Lord." Big old lion said, "You are sure it is, it is the Lord." He is wondering why, "Well, he had been down here about 20 minutes before you got here, and he gave us the word." I mean, we were going to eat him when he showed up, and he just went, and we just went, "Okay, we understand everybody down."

So Daniel, I know lions are not supposed to talk, but Balaam's ass did, and you know, down the line, there are going to be some college professors that are bigger than they are, and they talk, so I am going to tell you right now. I mean, Daniel, Romans 11:1-3, all that book of Romans talks about, even the animals are looking for the manifestation of the sons of God, so we are not happy about this fall either. I mean, we are going to be down here with fleas, ticks, and all this stuff, and we do not get nothing, but these old prophets, and they taste terrible. So let me tell you something. We are going to pile up over here, and we are going to make you the nicest bed you ever had, and we are going to purr you to sleep. You say you are crazy, you are not. I promise you, it just went like that. Maybe not exactly like that, but you know, he is over there, and he snuggles down, boy. I mean, I know what it is like to sleep in my three labs. I mean, they love me. I get on a bed, and I have got one tucked around my back, one puts her face right here on the side of my neck, and the other one gets wrapped around my leg, and I can even put him in position. I can, if I want to use him as a foot rest, I can put my legs over him, I can use one for a pillow. They do not move. You know what they do? I love it, I love it. I am saying that we all get settled right here, one in order, I hear the black one go. I hear the white one go. I hear the brown one go. The next thing I hear is, they are gone, and I am laying down there, and there are 112, you know, animals' temperatures about 112, a little higher than yours, and when the wind is open, it is kind of chilly down there, man, the big old brown one, he gets behind you, the black one gets to the other side, and the one wrapped around your feet, and you are just laying there. Next thing I know, I am gone, and we are all snoring, and we are all sleeping, and it is the most, I cannot imagine what it would be with nine, 1200 pound lions, but you know what?

The point is this: do not ever be afraid to go into the lion's den, when the Lion of the tribe of Judah goes with you. It would have been a tragedy if they had got him out of there, because when he came out, the king himself said, "Who can argue with this? He served the God of all gods." You know what? Maybe that is exactly what God wants to get out of your tough time. You see, the people that are making fun of you when you go through it and giving you the hardest time are probably, and I am not going to say in every case, but probably the people that God most wants to win to Christ, and the people like that are always going to be the hardest on you, because God is the hardest on them.

You see, I learned something a long time ago. I learned that God's Word does not return void. God always accomplishes the purpose where to it was sent. I know in my heart that when you live a life for Christ, it affects people, and people cannot get around it, and though you may not see the effect on somebody else's life, it is there if they are lost. I am telling you what, that is why they get irritable, that is why they give you problems, that is why they do not like it, and the bottom line is God wants to do something in your life, and when God puts you in the lion's den, just like He put Job on the ash heap, let me tell you something, both those men lied a little bit better afterwards than it was before. Building your faith, building your faith through adversity. That is why, that is why we have got to start and take from the basics, and take every man and every woman that wants to learn, and begin to show you how you build a relationship. Most churches just say, "Build one." Most churches say, "You need to have one." I do not know very many churches that will say, "Let me show you how to do it," and then walk you through it. I am talking about from giving you the verses, giving you everything you need. I am going to fix you up when we get to that point, that when you leave here, you are going to be set for the next week, and the next week, I will set you up for the next week, and the time that we go through it, if you do what you need to do, you will build a relationship with Christ, and you will understand all of those things.

## VIII. Conclusion and Prayer

I am telling you right now, this is why I am preaching on the opposition, because some of you already decided to do what is right, but when you really decide to build a relationship with God, and the number one thing in this message is, God is enough. You are going to get it. You are going to have to understand that God has a message for you, and God wants you to grow through adversity. It is the only way you can grow. God wants to build you like the Marine Corps, like the Army. God wants to build you to the place where you are strong, that you can endure hardness. God wants to put you in a place where only God can come through. Then when He comes through, He wants to show you, "Bob, I came through, and I am telling you, if I came through yesterday for you, I will come through tomorrow for you. If I am there for you today, and I was there for you yesterday, I will be there for you tomorrow." That is where you have to get. God had a message for Job. He used the devil as a delivery boy. Do not get so caught up with the delivery boy that you miss the message. God wants to build you.

I do not know where you are at this morning. I have no idea where you are at in your own personal relationship with God. I do not know. I just know this: if you are lost, God will save you. If you are not lost, and you are saved, and you want to do what is right, God will build within you everything you need to be everything God wants you to be. Our job is to help you get there. My job as pastor is simply that: to be there for you. My job is to be there for you, helping you put it together piece by piece, going through every opposition, giving you everything you need. This church is the most loving, caring church I have ever known in my life. It is only going to get better. These people, the older ones, have been through adversity. They know, they understand, and they have the capacity to give and to love in a way that it is hard to fathom. I am telling you, if you want to learn how to have a relationship with God, God has brought you to the right place. Not because we are so great, or we are so smart, because we have a book and we

believe it that gives us everything that we need in our lives. Everything any of us are in here is because of this book. Anything anybody's family is today is because of this book. This book will keep you like nothing else. That is why you need to begin to be able to relate. Job did not have the Bible, but he had a relationship with God, and through that, God gave him exactly, verbally what he needed. I do not know how he did it. The Bible did not say, but I know he did, because that is how he built his relationship. I am saying, you have all these things. You have more than he had. You will never lose what he lost. There is no reason for us not to be found faithful in the work and the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, I am going to say it to you like this: the only reason you will not have a relationship with God at the end of our coming up series is because you do not want one. It will not be because you will not have the material to build one. It is because you choose, "I do not want one." I am telling you, and that is between you and God, but I am just saying this, that is my job. That is what this church is all about. Because of that, we can thank God that God gave us a book that we can bet our soul on.

Let us pray.

Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We love You so much. We thank You, Father, for all that You do for us. Lord, I just pray today that You will take the words of this message and burn them into our hearts. Lord, let us look and see and understand all that You have for us. Help us to understand that the most important thing in all the world, above everything else, is our relationship with You. Lord, I know lots of people that have the right Bible, the right hymnal; they do all the right things, but the relationship with God is not there. Lord, that is the number one thing. Help us to see and understand it. Help us to realize, Father, that we have to have that first. Then, Lord, help us to realize that adversity will come. But, Lord, growth also comes through adversity. In every adverse thing, in every piece of opposition, there is a message for us from God. Lord, lots of times You will use a girlfriend or a boyfriend or a mom or a dad to be the deliverer of that message. Help us, Father, not to focus so much on the deliverer that we forget the deliverance: You, Father, and the message that You have. Thank You for today. Thank You for those that are here. May the visitors feel like they have come to a place that loves them and will teach them the Word of God, and that their desire is to learn more about You. May they in time join with us and be faithful in the Word of God. We will thank You now and praise You. In Jesus' name, for His sake, we ask it. Amen.