

I Know That My Redeemer Lives

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Date: 18 April 2021

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[0 : 00] We're going to come now to the Bibles and we've been looking at the book of Job with Phil Copeland over recent weeks and last week we're back into Job and today we are going to read together chapter 19.

The whole of chapter 19 and there are some wonderful verses in here but it's also very well it's a great lament isn't it as we'll see as we go through. Job is in the throes of wrestling with the torment of all the calamities the miseries that have come upon him and his family and heaped upon all of that the unfeeling so-called help of his friends. Poor Job.

And they've been speaking to him you'll see there Bildad one of his friends had been speaking to him in the previous chapter and it's been pretty hard on Job and so in chapter 19 Job answered and said how long will you torment me and break me in pieces with words?

These ten times you've cast reproach on me are you not ashamed to wrong me? And even if it be true that I've erred my error remains with myself.

If indeed you magnify yourselves against me and make my disgrace and argument against me know then that God has put me in the wrong and closed his net about me. Behold I cry out violence but I'm not answered.

[1 : 41] I call for help but there's no justice. He's walled up my way so that I cannot pass. And he has sent darkness upon my paths.

He's stripped from me my glory and taken a crown from my head. He breaks me down on every side and I'm gone. And my hope he has pulled up like a tree. He has kindled his wrath against me. And counts me as his adversary. His troops come on together. And they've cast up their siege ramp against me and encamp around my tent.

He's put my brothers far from me. And those who knew me are wholly estranged from me. My relatives have failed me. My close friends have forgotten me.

The guests in my house and my maidservants count me as a stranger. I've become a foreigner in their eyes. I call to my servant.

[2 : 44] But he gives me no answer. I must plead with him with my mouth for mercy. My breath is strange to my wife.

I'm a stench to the children of my own mother. Even young children despise me. When I rise, they talk against me.

All my intimate friends abhor me. Those whom I loved have turned against me. My bones stick to my skin and to my flesh.

And I've escaped by the skin of my teeth. Have mercy on me. Have mercy on me, O you my friends. For the hand of God has touched me.

Why do you, like God, pursue me? Why are you not satisfied with my flesh? O that my words were written. O that they were inscribed in a book.

[3 : 48] O that with an iron pen and lead they were engraved in the rock forever. For I know that my Redeemer lives. And at the last, he will stand upon the earth.

After my skin has thus been destroyed, yet in my flesh, I shall see God. Whom I shall see for myself. My eyes shall behold and not another.

My heart faints within me. If you say, how will we pursue him? And the root of the matter is found in him.

Be afraid of the sword. For wrath brings the punishment of the sword. That you may know there is a judgment. Amen.

And may God bless to us his word. God, please do have your Bibles open to Job chapter 19.

[4 : 58] Amen. And when I was a teenager, I was a member of the Army Cadet Force.

Which is basically a group where teenagers got to experience what life was like for British soldiers in the British Army. And we would often be taken away for the weekend or for days out.

And we would go to official army barracks. And we'd be trained up by some very, very mean looking soldiers. On proper army maneuvers and field battle tactics and so forth.

I remember one night being trained up on how to carry out a proper night patrol around the perimeter of the army barracks. And I seem to remember not being very good at it because I was cracking, as usual, a lot of jokes that weren't funny.

But I thought they were funny. And I was laughing out loud. So I wasn't very good on the night patrol. But the chap who was, the officer who was training us said, On night patrol, if you come across someone in the dark and you don't know who it is, you hold up your rifle and you shout, Halt! Who goes there?

[6 : 06] Friend or foe? Who goes there? Friend or foe? And really, that is the big question that Job has been asking of God throughout the book so far.

Who goes there? Friend or foe? In other words, Job has been desperately asking, Is God for me or against me? And that is a crucial question, isn't it?

Probably the most important question you and I could ever consider. For if God is for me, then ultimately nothing can do lasting harm to me. And I will come through any time of hardship as more than a conqueror.

But if God is against me, then it's a completely different matter. All is hopeless if God is against you. And really, the question, is God for me or against me?

That question lies underneath pretty much all of the why type of questions that believers painfully cry out when they've experienced loss and suffering.

[7 : 08] Why did my husband die? Why did the Lord take my loved one away from me? Why did my wife have to be diagnosed with Alzheimer's? Why did my parents split up, leaving me so heartbroken and so full of uncertainty?

Friends, when we ask these types of questions, we are really asking the bigger question, Is God for me or is he against me? You see, says the Christian, I read in the Bible that God loves me, that he cares for me, and that he is for me.

But if I'm being completely honest, it doesn't always seem like that is so. In fact, there are many times in the Christian life when it feels like God has actually turned against us. And he is treating me like an enemy for no apparent reason.

And of course, that causes great distress. And this lament of Job in chapter 19, it hones in on this key question, Is God for me or against me?

Is he friend or foe? Probably more so than any other of Job's laments in the book. And I'd like us to look at this chapter under three points this evening. The first two points, Job carries on his bleak, dark lament.

[8 : 21] And he's talking about how unfairly he feels God is treating him. But in the third and final point towards the end of the chapter, we have a massive, beautiful ray of hope bursting into Job's heart by faith.

Well, let's look at these three points. Firstly, first point, in verses 1 to 12, Job says, God has turned against me. God has turned against me. God seems to have turned into a cosmic monster God who is attacking me unfairly.

He's waged war upon me as though I was an enemy. And his wrath is unbearable. That's the big point that Job is making through this section. But before Job describes what the Lord has done for him, he rebukes his three friends who are sitting with him.

Please look at verse 2. Job says to them, How long will you torment me and break me in pieces with your words? These ten times, in other words, these loads of times that we've had this conversation, you've constantly cast reproach upon me.

Are you not ashamed to wrong me? So Job is rebuking his friends for speaking words that have been such a torment to him. The words, he says, Your words have been like a baseball bat and you've used him to batter me about with again and again and again until I've become broken.

[9 : 40] And friends, later on tonight, when you go home or if you were to switch off the live stream, read chapter 18. Read Bildad's words in chapter 18. They are brutal. He preaches, Job Bildad, in chapter 18, he preaches this sermon that if taken out of context, read on its own, you would actually look at it and think, that is a right and very powerful sermon about the horrors that will come upon all those who've rejected the Lord.

In other words, Bildad, in chapter 18, he gives a gripping and orthodox sermon on the true horrors of hell. And what will happen to all those who end up in hell, that is those who refused to turn away from sin to those who refused to turn their repentance and faith to God.

And yet in context, Bildad's sermon is completely useless, wrong and dangerous because he misapplies the truth that he's speaking about to Job and Job's situation.

In chapter 18, all the ways Bildad describes the man who goes to hell, they would have been very familiar to Job. Let me just give you some of these details. As I say, you can read it later yourself.

But Bildad says, the man who goes to hell, he is thrust from light into darkness.

In other words, immediately disaster sweeps upon his life out of the blue. And his skin is slowly and painfully eaten away. He is tormented all day and all night.

[11 : 07] There's no relief. He has no prosperity. His livelihood and all his security is plucked up out of the ground like a weed being pulled out of the soil. He has no prosperity and he has no progeny.

He has no children to remember him and to carry on his family name. There will be no survivors in the place where this man once lived. And when people look upon this man who is headed for hell, they will be utterly appalled by what they see, such as the depths of his suffering and his pain.

Now in chapter 18, Bildad never says, Job, this is you. But he doesn't have to. He doesn't have to. It is so obvious that he's talking about Job. And in effect, he's saying, Job, you are receiving this hellish treatment from God because you are an evil rejecter of God.

You are an unrighteous, unbelieving man of wickedness. And Job, what you're experiencing now, these hellish horrors, well, you will be experiencing them forever unless you repent.

That is the big idea of Bildad's sermon in chapter 18. And Job is having none of it. And rightly so.

He tells his friends that they should be ashamed for speaking about him in such ways.

[12 : 23] In verses 4 to 5 in chapter 19, he seems to be saying to them, look, if I had done what you accuse me of doing, then I would know that would be so in my conscience, in myself.

But honestly, I know that I'm not guilty of what you accuse me of. And you've drawn the wrong conclusion from my disgrace. I am not a wicked, unrepentant, unrighteous, unbeliever.

And in verse 6, he says, I'll tell you what's happened to me. Know this. God has turned against me for no good reason. God, as he says, has put me in the wrong.

Now, it isn't obvious from our translations, but the Hebrew word there in verse 6, the verb in the Hebrew for to put in the wrong, it really means to pervert justice. It's the same verb that Bildad used back in chapter 8, verse 3, when Bildad says, God does not pervert justice.

Well, here, Job says the opposite. He says, yes, Bildad, God seems to pervert justice. He certainly has done so in my case, bringing this terrible suffering upon me. And in verses 7 to 12, Job uses a series of powerful images that picture, and he's supposed to build up and build up and build up, just immense image after immense image about the terrible things that God has done to Job and the way that Job feels.

[13 : 45] And again, the picture here is God being of a kind of cosmic monster. So in verse 7, Job says, I am like a man in the street who's been violently mugged.

I've been robbed in the street, a victim of violence by a mugger. I cry out violence, but no one answers or helps me. And of course, the implication of what he's saying here is, God is the one who has mugged me.

He has carried out violence. In verse 8, Job pictures this monster God as some kind of unstoppable force, an unstoppable army, or perhaps an avalanche who has come and completely engulfed Job. He, the monster God, verse 8, has walled up my way so that I cannot pass. He has set darkness upon my paths.

In verse 9, Job says that he himself, he's like a king who's been defeated by this monster God and this monster God has stripped Job of his glory and taken the crown from Job's head.

[14 : 48] He goes on, verse 10, He, the monster God, breaks me down on every side. There's no escape. And I am gone and my hope has been pulled up like a tree.

He has kindled his wrath against me and counts me as his adversary. And verse 12 is really the climax of this section. Job says, He, the monster God, he's got all of his trips.

They've come together. They cast up their siege ramp against me and they've encamped around my tent. I don't know if you like camping. I absolutely hate camping. I will never go camping in my life.

Unless it's, I can't think of a time when it would ever be required to me to go camping. But there we go. But sorry if you like camping. But imagine that we've gone camping or you've gone camping. Not me.

But imagine you've gone camping. And you're somewhere up in the highlands and you're completely isolated and there's no one there for miles. And you're in your little flimsy one man tent in the Scottish highlands.

[15:45] And in the morning you hear a little noise outside and you unzip your tent door and you peep outside and you see all around you the entire British Army, the entire Royal Air Force and the Marine Corps as well, the Royal Marines.

And every single soldier in all of these sections of the military, they've all got the most deadly weapons that they could ever get their hands on and they're all pointed at your head. And there's this you in your one man tent that you bought from Tissot on special offer.

And you're sitting there thinking, is this just an overreaction? Is this a bit much? Am I such a threat? And Job says, that is exactly the way that God is treating me.

I have been surrounded by the armies of heaven. All of God's troops are on me. And he says, look, the God that I thought I once knew so well, the God that I once thought was my friend, the God that I once believed was for me, he now seems to be a cosmic monster who's acting in a deeply unjust way.

He's turned against me. That's the first point. Here's the second point. In verse 13 to 22, Job goes on to say that God has isolated me.

[17:02] God has isolated me. So in this section, Job says to his friends, it's not enough that this monster God has attacked and besieged me. He has also trashed all of my relationships.

He has isolated me cruelly and I have no human companionship. One of the things that I hated most about lockdown was not being able to see my loved ones and my friends and people around about me, my church family.

It's been hard, I think. Well, Job has faced a far deeper isolation and lockdown than any of us have ever faced. And that's what he pours out in these verses here.

And I think actually these verses, if you listen to them carefully, you'll see that they are probably the saddest verses in the whole of the book, if not the entire Bible. One commentator describes these verses as a terrible portrayal of the miserable loneliness of hell.

Please look at verse 13 and 14. Job says, He, the monster God, has put my brothers far from me and those who knew me are wholly estranged from me.

[18:07] My relatives have failed me. My close friends have forgotten me. In other words, all the people whom Job had felt he could rely upon have abandoned him. Those bound to him with ties of loyal friendship and fond love, they've all failed him.

He goes on in verse 15. He says, The guests in my house and my maidservants count me as a stranger. I've become a foreigner in their eyes. We know from the start of chapter 1 that at one time Job was the honoured master of the house.

But now, his former guests and his servants treat him as though they never knew him at all. Verse 16, His servants, they used to listen to him. They used to obey his every word, respect him.

But now they treat him as though he were dead, that he wasn't there. In verse 17, we see that Job's most intimate relationships have also been trashed.

Look at verse 17. My breath is strange to my wife and I am a stench to the children of my own mother. He says, Even my wife hates me.

[19:13] I am repulsive to her. And it's the same with my siblings. I am a foul stench that no one wants to be around. Verse 18, Job says that when the local kids walk past him on their way to and from school, they ridicule him.

They mock him. In other words, Job has become the local laughing stock. And he sums it all in verse 19 by saying, All of the people that he once loved and still loves the most, they've all turned against him.

He is in immense pain because of the hellish isolation that he's been plunged into. And Job says that he knows who has done this to him.

Just look at verse 21 and this is a renewed rebuke to the friends. Verse 21, Have mercy on me, have mercy on me, O my friends, for the hand of God has touched me.

Why do you, like God, pursue me? Why are you not satisfied with my flesh? There is the hand of the monster God, says Job, who's pursued me and touched me.

[20 : 22] It's the hand of God that's plunged me into misery. Well friends, let's just pause there and let's ask this question, is Job right? Is he right?

Is it as simple as he makes it out to be? Is it God's hand who has done this? Well, I don't normally do this but we're going to have a couple of cross references here. Keep a finger on Job 19 and just flick back please to Job 1.

Job 1, verse 11. And let's remind ourselves of the events that took place in heaven at the start of the book.

Events, by the way, that Job and his friends still know nothing about. In Job 1, verse 11, here Satan is talking to the Lord about Job in the heavenly courtroom. And he says to the Lord, stretch out your hand and touch all he has and he will curse you to your face.

And the Lord said to the Satan, behold, all that he has is in your hand, Satan. Only against him do not stretch out your hand.

[21 : 30] So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord. And they look on to chapter 2, verse 5. Again, this is Satan talking to the Lord about Job.

Satan said, stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh and he will curse you to your face. And the Lord said to the Satan, behold, he is in your hand.

Only spare his life. Okay, flick back to chapter 19. So in actual fact, the hands and the fingers that destroyed Job's possessions and killed Job's children and wrecked Job's health and caused Job to be so hellishly isolated, they were technically the hands of the Satan.

Not the hands of God. Yes, it was the hand of Satan acting with the permission of the Lord and within the strict constraints given by the Lord. But to be precise, it was the Satan's hand and not God's hand that actually did these terrible things.

And friends, this is a very important insight. The Satan is fond of disguise. He disguises himself as an angel of light. Again and again in the book of Job, what you're going to see is the Satan masquerades as the Lord and persuades Job that it is directly the Lord who has turned against him.

[22 : 58] Just as if you think when the Roman soldiers blindfolded Jesus and when they struck him and asked, who is it that struck you? Job cannot see whose hand is striking him.

Now we know this, but Job and his friends certainly don't. The friends, if you remember, have no place in their theological beliefs for Satan. Their world has been described by one commentator as being like a slot machine world with one slot machine maker who set the rules.

You pop a coin of goodness into the machine and out pops a can of blessing or you put in a coin of badness and out clunks a can of poison. That's the world that they live in.

Their God is not the creator or sustainer but the clock maker who sets the machine running and then just leaves it to run, also known as deism. The idea that there might be real forces of evil in this world, forces with real personality, real influence, has no place in the thinking of the three friends.

But although Job, like his friends, does not know what's been happening in heaven in chapters 1 and 2, he's now beginning to wonder whose hand is behind the suffering. You remember that we saw this last Sunday, those of you who were here back in chapter 9.

[24 : 16] Remember, Job asked this question. If it is not he, if it's not the Lord who's doing all these things, who then is it who treats his world so unfairly?

These things are happening and God is in control so presumably they are God's doing, are they not? For if it is not God doing them, who is it?

You see, although most of Job's laments are just that, laments, somehow, Job as a real believer, he cannot let go of the hope that ultimately the monster God that has taken up so much of his mind and his thinking is not actually who the true God really is and is not the true God who has the last word.

And again, we found this long and hinted at back in chapter 9, verse 33. You remember? Job said, there is no arbiter, no mediator between us, me and God, who might lay his hand on us both.

In other words, Job wished that there was a just judge in heaven who would see that justice is done. As it were, a God above and beyond the monster God that has so dominated his mind and his heart and his speech in this book.

[25 : 33] In other words, somehow, as the book progresses, Job glimpses that there is justice in the end and that a real believer will finally be vindicated and seen publicly to be a real believer.

And that brings us on to the last section of chapter 19. And we reach, perhaps, the pinnacle of Job's faith in the darkness. There's a third point.

Job says, I know that God is my redeemer and he will vindicate me. In verse 23 to 29. So in verse 23 to 24, Job is still glum.

He has been fighting to prove his innocence, but it's a losing battle. That's what he feels like. He's pretty sure that he's going to die and he knows that when he dies, his friends will not be satisfied with his death.

Job knows that they will continue to malign his reputation. So after he dies, he knows that his friends, if you like, on his gravestone are going to put, here lies Job, who was a sinner with secret sins he refused to confess.

[26 : 42] And he has paid the penalty for his sins at last. And the justice of God has been vindicated by his death. May he not rest in peace.

And so in verse 23, Job simply longs that his protestations of innocence may be recorded permanently in a book. Or verse 24, engraved in rock, inscribed as, or his defense would be described as a kind of everlasting defense against the ongoing maligning words of his friends against his character.

But then in verse 25, looking forward to a time after his death, Job says these magnificent words. Look at verse 25. I know that my Redeemer lives and at the last he will stand upon the earth.

And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God. I myself will see him with my own eyes. I, and not another.

How my heart yearns within me. So Job is saying that ultimately his hope of vindication doesn't lie upon his words being written down on a tablet or on a scroll.

[27 : 58] No. His hope of vindication is much more certain than that. He says, I know that my Redeemer lives and that he will stand upon the earth or that could be translated as he will stand upon the dust which all the way through the book of Job, the dust is always shorthand for the grave.

So Job seems to be saying that at some point in the future, well after my death even, my Redeemer will come and he will stand upon my grave, he will vindicate my name.

And more than that, just look at verse 26 again. Job says that he will be there in the flesh to see this Redeemer doing this. Job believes that he will be raised from the dead and he will see his Redeemer face to face on the day of his vindication.

Now the Hebrew word translated Redeemer is the word goel. and it's used most often in the Old Testament to refer to someone to whom one is related to.

Someone who is in some way the next of kin or a family member whose job it was to make sure that you got justice or if you were a family member you got justice in the end.

[29 : 13] For example, in the Old Testament we sometimes come across this so-called character called the Avenger of Blood. In the Hebrew the word is the same as Redeemer or goel. And their job was in the days before the law courts to make sure that justice is done when a family member has been murdered.

The goel is the person appointed to go and make sure that justice is served a Redeemer. And we find a sort of related idea in the book of Ruth.

Remember, I think we studied Ruth a couple of years ago now where we meet Boaz. He acts as Ruth's kinsman Redeemer as goel caring for her in her widowhood and in fact becoming for her the husband that she so desperately needed.

And also throughout the Old Testament the word goel this word is frequently used to describe the Lord God himself and how he relates to his people. The Lord is our goel.

And friends, I take it that this is the Redeemer that Job is speaking about here. Job is saying in effect I will not finally believe that the monster God whom I've been speaking about in my laments is the true God who made this world and who runs this world.

[30 : 28] For I know the God I have always feared and loved. This God is related to me by covenant and I belong to him and his family and his people and in the end even if it is way after my death I shall see him.

He will vindicate me so that he will publicly show me to be a real believer. So who is Job's Redeemer? Well surely it's the living God himself.

No wonder at the end of verse 27 he says my heart yearns within me or it faints within me. See in the depths of his suffering Job says I know that one day I shall see the living God he will appear

before me and he will say well done good and faithful servant.

But how can we be sure that this is not just wishful thinking on Job's part? Well those of you who are into your music will know the magnificent piece the Messiah handles Messiah and there's a famous section in that great bit of music where these verses in Job 19 are placed alongside 1 Corinthians 15 verse 20.

Let me read them to you. The words say this I know that my Redeemer liveth and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth and though worms destroy this body yet in my flesh I shall see God for now is Christ risen from the dead the first fruits of them that sleep.

[32 : 01] The reason we know that Job's confidence is not just wishful thinking is because Christ has been raised from the dead. See friends there was once a real believer and it looked like God was against this real believer because hellish horrors were poured out upon him.

But in reality he was a blameless believer who had done nothing wrong yet he died a terrible death that he did not deserve. And yet the Redeemer God that Job speaks of here publicly vindicated him on the third day when he raised him from the dead.

And so the bodily resurrection of Christ gives us the assurance that Job's confidence here was not wishful make believe but a sure and solid hope.

You see what Job says here is extraordinary and it's what Dale Ralph Davis describes as unbelievable belief. Even though Job then if you read on he goes back into more and more laments and says more and more bitter things about the monster God who seems to have attacked him. Christians can read these words in chapter 19 and rightly say Job spoke more truly than he may have realized. There is a sovereign redeemer who lives and who will one day vindicate every believer and declare every believer justified from all sin.

[33 : 30] The true God is the father who sent his son into the world to be the innocent believer who dies for sinners and the true God is also the son who so loved us that he gave himself for us.

And so every believer every Christian you're a Christian here this evening or watching at home you can say with great boldness God is for me in Christ and no power of death or demon in the present or in the future can ever separate me from his love in Christ.

And friends as we close let me just say this is that each of us who suffers or who cares for another who suffers we will inevitably ask why?

Why has this happened? Why did this happen to me or to her or to him? And we may ask perhaps in some desperation is God for me or is he against me?

Because sometimes it feels as though God is a monster out to make life a misery. So that we or the one for whom we care for may feel very alone and deeply distressed.

[34 : 43] But as we hear Job's faith in these words we can bring our pain to the Lord Jesus Christ. Even though our life and our strength may be ebbing away from us and our own wick burning low you and I really can say oh that my words were written oh that they were inscribed in a book oh that with an iron pen and lead they were engraved in the rock forever.

For I know that my Redeemer lives and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed yet in my flesh I shall see God whom I shall see for myself and my eyes shall behold and not another my heart faints within me.

Well amen. Let's pray to our living God and our great Redeemer. Lord gracious God we praise and thank you that the Lord Jesus Christ will come again one day soon to stand in triumph on the earth. To stand in victory over the grave. that on that day all those who are united to him, all those who have shared in his sufferings, they will be vindicated forever.

Father we thank you too for the patience and the perseverance of your servant Job. And we pray that you would give us the strength that we need to patiently persevere in the faith just as he did.

[36 : 23] And Lord should any of us ever face a time of great darkness and difficulty. We pray that you would be our help and our strength. That you would help us not to shrink away from you but instead to come to you with honesty.

To know that you are a God who is big enough to take our prayers of protest and our laments, our cries of pain. And we pray that you would also help us at these moments to boldly declare, I know that my redeemer lives and at the last he shall stand upon the earth.

And after my skin has been thus destroyed yet in my flesh I shall see God whom I shall see for myself my eyes shall behold and not another.

Oh gracious God our hearts do faint and yearn within us at the prospect of this glorious future. We praise and thank you for such hope and we pray this in Jesus name.
Amen.