

Series: "Corona, Corona"

Sermon: "Faith in God...Why Do I have It?"

Text: Job 1-2; 42:1-6

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- Good morning, good afternoon or good evening, whenever and wherever you are listening to this sermon or reading the manuscript.
- Here in Colorado, I hope you are enjoying some of our beautiful sunshine and that it warms not only your face but your heart.
- I took two weeks off from "sermonizing" for the Sundays of March 15th and March 22nd. The FBC building was closed and I didn't post any recorded sermons as I am doing now.
- I wish I could claim that I knew exactly what I was doing back then with certainty. Why did I decide not to post sermons for those Sundays? As I am sure those of you who know me realize, it wasn't for a lack of words to say. I always have "words." Words are one of my important tools for teaching truth.
- I watched the frightened world scramble full speed to concoct any possible ways to make things feel *normal* again.
- I listened to and read hours of words from the scientific experts, human leaders and politicians trying to convince the frightened world that they were confident on exactly how to maintain control.
- As I saw the world's great fear caused by the *normality* of life breaking down and a feeling of *control* being lost, one question would not leave my mind. It felt like a song stuck there.
- ***How is Jesus' church responding?*** Are those who have *faith* in the God responding differently? Are people of faith in the One who not only has the power and wisdom to deal with the chaos of any *leviathan* monster but actually created the human-frightening *Leviathan*—are these people—of that sort of *faith*—in this Creator God responding *differently* to what feels like uncontrolled chaos breaking up their lives?
- In light of the tumultuous clamor in the world to hurry and "fix" things, my choice for me and for FBC as much as I influence choices

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in our body was to "cease" and call us to look to the Word to remember again just who our God that we trust is no matter what circumstances may look like in the world. The sermon on March 29th was thus called: "*Cease! The LORD Is Near.*"

- As I watched another week back then, my question was, will we as a church be pulled a bit into trying to do what many other well-known churches are doing attempting to control the maelstrom created by Leviathan's chaos-stirring tail?
- Then, on Easter Sunday, Mary and I read to you a long portion from John's Gospel. I wanted us to hear again what happened that confusing, horrible, dark yet wonderful and miraculous week in Jerusalem. I wanted us to observe what Jesus was teaching about "faith in God" in very bad times—especially when goals and dreams Jesus' followers had planned for God to fulfill are broken and crushed. What does this say about "faith in God?"
- Then on April 19th came a sermon called, "*Eyes of Faith...Eyes of Flesh.*" Is "faith in God" totally or even mostly about us believing so that things will happen as we understand they should happen in the future? Or are "eyes of faith," and thus "faith in God," a whole different paradigm for living? Are they a way of seeing the world, even now, in whatever circumstances it may be in differently than a person can see with "eyes of flesh" alone?
- If this is the case, and I believe it is, what does this mean about the way we understand "faith in God?" Are we even using the right paradigm or is "faith in God" about a changed paradigm for all of life?
- The Lord Jesus, both pre and post resurrection seemed to want to teach this call to paradigm change to those he loved with all his

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heart. He knew that "eyes of flesh" would not be a sustaining source of what he thought of as "faith in God."

- Given the *individualistic* American values, which is the *water in which we swim* culturally and sometimes even in the church, I can't say this next truth often enough or forcefully enough: ***Jesus pointed those he loved, those who would carry on the redemptive mission after Him, to Scripture as the guiding truth to reveal more and more the God in whom they should place faith.***
- Without knowing the God of Scripture, even believers are free to design the God they wish they had who does the things they wish he would do and to do that wishing from an individualistic perspective.
- Very often this God we are free to design for ourselves is the God who will give us a feeling of control, certainty, personal peace in our desires and even personal significance.
- This is especially true in times when our circumstances feel like the bottom is about to drop out of the way we *expect* the world to work—that is, when our paradigm produced and maintained by "flesh eyes" is about to fail.
- Last week's message, closing the month of April 2020 was "*Faith Eyes: What Are We Really Trusting?*" That was when I started to get "tough."
- As I record these messages for you, I do it also listening for myself. For many reasons the idea of "faith in God" can be difficult to talk or preach about. In some ways it is a very basic idea, "*What do I believe?*" In other ways it is worthy of a place as one of the overarching threads of all of God's plan from Creation on and all of His Word—from *Genesis* to *Revelation*.
- Just like *your* "faith in God" is always subject to God's purifying processes described by James and other writes of Scripture—just like

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yours, the preacher's "faith in God" is always subject to needing purification.

- Am I really trusting the God of the Bible? Are you? Or, do we trust in what we want the God of the Bible to "be" and maybe to "do" for us?
- We may think we have this questioned answered once-for-all, but I suspect it is a life-long question for all of us.
- None of us has "faith in God" perfectly and all the time. This is why "James" said we should welcome trials of all kinds. They give us an opportunity to see God at work purifying our "faith in *Him*."
- So, to the church today and to us each individually, James might say, *"Ask yourselves why the response of so many of those who say they are trusting in God is to jump immediately and in alignment with the world to FIX things—to restore a feeling of normality?"*
- James says when God is purifying our faith we should be quick to hear the wisdom of his word and slow to speak the answers to the circumstances.
- I think Jesus and James and maybe even Paul might have said to us, first, **"Peace be still!"**
- So, why do I "have faith in God" and how might God be working to purify the nature of that faith?
- I will probably regret calling this series *"Corona...Corona"* and singing it to the tune of a song (which I can't recall right now) every time I think it or type it. I may not regret it because it will serve as a clear reminder of one of the most obvious *"purifying-of-faith-in-God"* opportunities for the rich, comfortable, Western-cultured church that I have experienced in my lifetime.
- If the questions raised in the last sermon by asking "what are we **REALLY** trusting" seemed "harsh" or to some of you, even

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nonsensical, this parallel but more pinnacle question I am raising for the next few minutes may seem even more out of place. *"Shouldn't a pastor be trying to comfort us in times of turmoil rather than asking us deep questions about our faith?"* James didn't think so.

- I struggled with which of the Scripture texts that ask or address this question I should use. While reading a favorite blog, I was reminded that the whole Old Testament book of *"Job"* is the granddaddy of Scripture for answering the question I am asking today.
- ***Why do I have faith in God? Why do I trust God? Why do WE—FBC together as a body—have faith in and trust God?"***
- The book of *"Job"* is the "granddaddy" exemplar because, as the blog reminded me, in it, we have the most truly righteous man in the world facing the most horrendous circumstances in the world. The answer to the question "Why do I have faith in God?" in this example of extremes will then cover the whole range of believers and terrible or trying experiences.
- The problem with the book of *"Job"* for this sermon is that it is too long to do real justice to the whole argument of the text. However, if I can only kindle your thoughts on this question, I believe that will be enough.
- Let me read the first 2 chapters to you, with some interspersed comments, and I think these chapters will establish that I am asking the same question the book is asking. Then, we will look at the conclusion of the book and we will allow it to ask us the question again: ***"Why do we have faith in God?"***
- I believe that the question and seeking the answer will help more of us see that "faith in God" and "eyes of faith" belong together to a whole different paradigm. The world can't recognize this truth. And sometimes we believers miss it as well.

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- Job chapter 1, verse 1...

1In the land of Uz (*that's the "land of "Uz not "Oz"*) there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. ² He had seven sons and three daughters, ³ and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East. (*Notice all the sevens. They may emphasize the fullness or perfection of what this man Job had in his wonderful life on this earth*)

⁴ His sons used to take turns holding feasts in their homes, and they would invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. ⁵ When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would send and have them purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, "Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." This was Job's regular custom.

(Job always seemed to have God on his mind for himself and those he loved. He showed it by offering sacrifices. He was concerned that his kids, in their perhaps less mature "faith in God" might not be as careful to honor God and to trust him no matter what happened)

⁶ One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them. ⁷ The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?"

Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it."

⁸ Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil." (*So God himself considers Job to be a uniquely righteous man of "faith in God." But, and here is the introduction to question we are considering...Satan asks...*)

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⁹ **"Does Job fear God for nothing?"** Satan replied.

*(He is asking our question. Why **does** Job have faith in you, God?)*

¹⁰ "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. ¹¹ But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face."

(In other words does Job reverence you—does Job trust you—does Job have faith in you God because you God have blessed and protected Job giving him a perfectly wonderful life?) (The Lord says, let me prove you wrong)

¹² The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger."

(Take it all away—the wealth—the prestige—the servants—take even the wonderfully full family of sons and daughters I have given Job.)

^{12a} Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

¹³ One day when Job's sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, ¹⁴ a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby, ¹⁵ and the Sabeans attacked and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

¹⁶ While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The fire of God fell from the sky and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

¹⁷ While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and swept down on your camels and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

¹⁸ While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, "Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, ¹⁹ when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the

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desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

²⁰ At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship ²¹ and said:

"Naked I came from my mother's womb,
and naked I will depart.

The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away;
may the name of the LORD be praised."

²² In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.

(In perhaps the most personally devastating narrative of Scripture, everything the man Job has, has been wiped out. God's abundant blessings and protection were gone from the man's life on earth. Was Job hurt? Broken? Devastated as a man? Yes. Did he blame God for doing something unfair? No. Instead, he worshipped God—praised the Lord who had, at the very least allowed this devastation.) (Was it done? Was the question "Why does Job have faith in God, answered? Not yet.)

2 On another day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them to present himself before him. ² And the LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?"

Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it."

³ Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason."

⁴ "Skin for skin!" Satan replied. "A man will give all he has for his own life. ⁵ But stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face."

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⁶ The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life."

⁷ So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head. ⁸ Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes.

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

¹⁰ He replied, "You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?"

In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.

- *It's one thing to take a man's stuff and even his family, but it may be a different matter to hurt the man himself. I bet Job won't have faith in you God when he so sick he himself might die. Was it different? Job's wife thought it was. She believed he ought to just do something bad enough that God would finish the job and kill him for it.*
- *But Job would not do it. He would not blame God. He declared that God has the right to give us what he wants to give us and take away what he wants to take away.*
- I'm going to make a big exegetical jump based on all Job talks about with his friends with God in the rest of the book. I think that even this nice sounding theology from Job is still tinged with the idea that, "Yes! God certainly has the right to give us what he thinks we deserve. And that 'faith in God is' is about God getting that right."
- For the rest of the book, a major topic of discussion is the faith-paradigm of the day. How even righteous Job understood "faith in God."
- This paradigm that touched even the most righteous man on earth, by God's own evaluation, made sense that God gives humans what they deserve from his perfectly righteous and thus just perspective.
- ***Therefore Job...as two of Job's friends and his wife argue, you must have sinned Job to deserve this from a righteous and thus just God.***

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- We could call that dominant faith-paradigm a paradigm of **"transactional faith."** It's a paradigm that assumes a *quid pro quo* relationship with God. If I have faith in God he will bless me. If I do not have faith in God I will suffer some level of calamity in life.
- It is as if "faith" is the currency humans use to **buy** God's good graces in a non-works way.
- To put it crassly, why do we have "faith in God" in this paradigm? We have "faith in God" because of what God *does*—but especially what he *does* for us who have faith.
- This paradigm is there throughout much of the book of Job. This paradigm has been present throughout church history. This paradigm is present today.
- This paradigm is probably the leading paradigm for understanding "faith in God" in the Western church today. This paradigm is what I often see revealing itself in many places as I watch those who claim "faith in God" deal with present circumstances devastating the life we are used to living.
- Job answers many things wisely in the book. Even when he is questioned by God, Job acquits himself as a man who has some humility, wisdom and righteousness in his heart. Yet God still pushes Job, the most righteous man on earth, more and more for Job to get the point—to answer the question the way it should be answered.
- *"Sure, says Job, you are right God. I wasn't there when you made creation or when you make the hidden things of this world work even I what feels like out-of-control chaos to me. I don't have enough information and you have it all God. I'll trust you to get it right because you are infinitely wiser than I and you know what is just. God, I will have faith in you because you are able to fix things the way they should be in my world as I understand it should be."*

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- *"Not my point Job. I don't want you to trust me simply because I'll make your quid pro quo system a wise and fair one. I want you to have another controlling reason for your faith in me."*
- God, in a last lesson for Job, describes chaos creatures Job will understand. Stumpy powerful-legged *Behemoth* was made by God and can stand in the flood of the waters of Chaos in life.
- *Leviathan*, a creature of chaos that Job knows he certainly can't control is not only easily controlled by God—the Creator God made Leviathan in the first place.
- God's superior knowledge, power and control, even though they are true, are not the real issue here. They are not really the point of the discussion even though Job thinks they may have been.
- The point is that Job is indeed well out of his league. There is nothing even near like any *quid pro quo playing field* on which humans can engage God and make have him do their bidding even by faith and righteousness.
- The faith-paradigm is totally different than this reigning faith-paradigm even when good people like Job live by it.
- So, finally in the first verses of the last chapter—**Job 42**—Job has begun to grasp the paradigm-breaking nature of the lesson on "faith in God"—that God himself is teaching.
- Let me read you those few verses **in Job 42:1-6...**

42Then Job replied to the LORD:

²"I know that you can do all things;

no plan of yours can be thwarted.

³You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?'

Surely I spoke of things I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me to know.

⁴"You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak;

I will question you,

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and you shall answer me.'

⁵My ears had heard of you

but now my eyes have seen you.

⁶Therefore I despise myself

and repent in dust and ashes."

- Job has now seen something different. He has looked beyond the dominant paradigm of transactional faith that says—trust God and he will pay you back by doing things for you.
- His faith is purified enough to say, "*I trust God because I see he is God!*"
- Job knows the field of faith in God is very different than he thought. As righteous as he was, he and God weren't even involved in the same "game" he thought he was playing by the rules he thought were in place. These were human rules that seemed fair. In the end, God is so far beyond these rules of human fairness that even righteous Job is worthy of despising by comparison to God.
- God is outside of our transactional-faith paradigm we have created thinking it works with his righteousness and justice as we expect them to work. But, we often try to drag him back into that human-made paradigm and we call that us having "faith in God."
- ***Listen carefully to a critical distinction:*** Can we have faith in God to do things for us? Certainly God will do all he has promised assuming we understand his promises and they are not simply our desires.
- Do—better, *should* we have faith in God because he will do these things for us? If we do, we are likely trapped in that transactional paradigm and it will impact our idea of God—it will attempt to bring him down to a human playing field and rules in our thinking—especially when we face chaos in this world and need things fixed.
- Do we have faith in God because he does for us what we want? Or do we have faith in God because, through his Word we have seen ***who*** God is?

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- Do we have faith in God like this even when he gives us no fixes, no good explanations, no comforting revelations, no feelings in our hearts, no certainty in our heads, and no visible path for a return to normal from calamity?
- Admittedly, those two ways of looking at faith get mixed-together often in my life especially when I desperately feel I need something. I'm not even beyond bargaining outright with God sometimes.
- When you first hear this, it may seem to be a distinction without a difference. However, we tend to look at it from a normally transactional-faith paradigm.
- BUT I think there is a difference—an important one. It is where I have been headed all along in these "Corona...Corona" sermons even though at this moment it may not feel like a very wonderful destination.
- Do I have faith in God because he does things for me that I think I like and need or do I have faith in God foundationally just because he *is* God?
- The difference in those two shows up more clearly when we feel chaos around us. Am I trusting God because he can get me out of this mess, as I define that escape? Or am I trusting God because I believe he is God and worthy of my faith even if that brings no earthly understanding to the situation at hand?
- Why do I have faith today? Is it because God is the "Holy fix-it man?" That dangerously diminishes, for me, who God truly is.
- God was moving Job from one faith-paradigm to another even as his friends and wife clung to their normal, reasonable, righteous-sounding, transactional paradigm of faith in God.
- God wants to move us along that same path from *quid-pro-quo* faith **to seeing-he-is-God** faith. The chaos of these days is an important way he is working to do just that for you, me and for Fellowship Bible Church.