

CGM PASTORAL CARE CONFERENCE – AUGUST 2013
SPEAKER: LIM KOU

MESSAGE 5 – UNDERSTANDING JOB, THE TWO KINGDOMS, MAN OF FAITH

Introductory remarks

- The four foundational areas covered in the preceding four messages have been the content and substance of my ministry all these years
- On my website www.godandtruth.com you can find more than 500 audio messages, numerous edited text messages, and the three books I have made available for free distribution

UNDERSTANDING JOB

The Book of Job

- The Book of Job is very profound and meaningful. There are deep truths that God seeks to teach us
- But it is not easy to understand or appreciate the book. Some find it baffling, as it seems to raise more questions than answers
- Careful reading of the book and pondering over the content can yield very satisfying answers to questions that we may have
- In the Book of Job, God speaks to us through a story, a historical narrative, a true account of an episode in a person's life

The book "Understanding Job"

- The content of *Understanding Job* is based on eight messages preached in a local congregation in 1986 as part of a series of messages, *Appearance and Reality*
- It is an attempt to understand the person Job, his state and the meaning in his heart, and how he fared before, during and after the severe trials that came upon him
- It is also an attempt to understand some major issues in the Book of Job and a number of difficult questions that confront the reflective reader:
 - o Why did God allow Satan to attack Job so severely?
 - o Why does the Scriptures hold Job up as a very positive example for us and why did God speak favourably of him and yet also rebuke him in strong terms?
 - o Why did Job falter in spite of his moral and spiritual stature? Were his failures serious? Was it feasible for Job to overcome in the difficult context he was in? How could he have done so?
 - o Did God answer the questions that perplexed and disturbed Job? If He did not, how were Job's problems resolved? Why did God answer Job the way He did?
 - o Is there significant meaning in what Job went through and are there important lessons we can learn from the Book of Job?

Outstanding features in the Book of Job

- Several unusual features stand out in the Book of Job:
 - o It offers a rare glimpse into what takes place in the spiritual realm, which has implications for our lives

- o It records important conversations between God and Satan about a man, Job
- o It reveals Satan's tactics in afflicting God's children, and how God, while allowing the attacks, drew a limit to Satan's sphere of operation
- o It discloses to us that despite Job's exemplary character, or more accurately, because of it, God allowed Satan to test him through a series of onslaughts
- o It paints a scenario where the main characters, Job and his friends, were neither aware of the conversations between God and Satan, nor had any recognition of the existence of Satan and his working in the situation
- o It devotes four chapters to speeches by God addressing a specific individual, Job
- All these hint at the Book of Job being a significant book through which God intends to teach us deep and important truths

Significant truths from story of Job

- A deep appreciation of the sovereignty of God, His majesty, greatness and power, and the knowledge and wisdom of God
- The wisdom of God – seen in the way He responded to Job's failures and the questions that perplexed Job - helping Job to recognise his failures and resolve his deficiencies without answering the questions that perplexed him
- There is profound meaning in God allowing His children to go through pain and suffering and attacks of the evil one:
 - o It helps to nurture our faith, our relationship with God, the qualities of the inner man, growth in moral and spiritual stature
 - o All this is vital for the fulfilment of God's purposes
- The quality of commitment, faith, posture and attitude that God desires to establish in us:

An unwavering faith and confidence in God and His ways, accompanied by unceasing worship, praise, thanksgiving, appreciation and humble, joyful submission to God and His perfect wisdom, together with steadfast love and commitment to Him and to the truth whatever the circumstances.
- A powerful and beautiful imagery on the most important issue - worship of God – presented in a most striking and unusual way:
 - o Job had been severely attacked by the evil one, his possessions had been destroyed, his children had perished, he was covered with boils, he suffered much physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually, he was misunderstood, maligned, despised, ostracised
 - o Yet Job was seen worshipping and fully submitting to God at the end of the story, even before God restored his fortunes – he repented in dust and ashes, the questions that perplexed him still unanswered
 - o Job's response vindicated God's appreciation of him in Job 1:8 - "My servant Job...no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil"
 - o It demonstrated the falsehood of Satan's allegation that Job feared God because God had made a hedge about him and all that he has
 - o The severity of the trials and attacks of the evil one not only did not destroy Job's faith in God, it raised the quality of Job's worship of God, and his faith in and commitment to God
- The story of Job answers a question crucial for the fulfilment of God's purposes:

Can man develop genuine, deep moral qualities within and have genuine, deep love for God and truth, independent of outward circumstances?

- The story of Job can deepen our appreciation of the Scriptures and our conviction that all Scripture is inspired by God – and that passages in the Scriptures we find difficult to understand or puzzling does not mean there is no way they can be meaningfully understood and appreciated

THE TWO KINGDOMS

Introductory remarks

- The Lord Jesus Christ is at the heart of the fulfilment of God's purposes and God's revelation to man
- He is God's solution to the plight of man and His provision for our full salvation
- He is the Saviour of mankind, the Word of God, the Light of the world, our perfect Teacher, the Way, the Truth and the Life
- As Paul puts it so succinctly: “Christ in you, the hope of glory”
- As God's children, it is our desire to respond well to His call. We want to fulfil His will for our lives and participate fully in the fulfilment of His purposes. To do so, it is imperative for us to deepen in our personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and identify with the primary concerns of His heart
- We must learn well from Him: His teaching, His perfect example, and the way He lived His life during His time on earth, which climaxed in His death and resurrection
- This approach to life is well exemplified in the life of Paul and summed up in his testimony: For to me to live is Christ. I desire to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified
- It has been a burden of my heart to communicate this vast and important subject on the Lord Jesus Christ and the implications of the Cross, and for over a period of nine years, I preached a series of messages on it¹. The eight messages on which this book is based form a part of this series

Answering fundamental questions

- When we reflect on the earthly life of the Lord Jesus and ponder about our own earthly existence, we are confronted with some fundamental questions
- This book is an attempt to answer these questions from the biblical perspective:
 - o If the Scriptures prophesied that the Lord Jesus would be a great king with everlasting dominion and glory, why was He born into this world in a manger and of poor parents? Why did He wear no crown except a crown of thorns? Why was He mocked at, spat on, beaten, scourged and crucified like a criminal? If He is the King of kings, what kind of a king is He? (The Lord Jesus: “My kingdom is not of this realm.”)
 - o What is the meaning and purpose of our time on earth? Since there is so much pain, toil, sorrow and temptations in this world, is it not better that we depart from this world and be with the Lord in heaven? (Our time on earth: for us to learn and grow in moral and spiritual stature - to be ready for eternity – and to contribute to the advancement of God's kingdom - the equipping and readiness of God's workman is vital for effective and fruitful ministry)
 - o How can we live well as citizens of heaven in a fallen world?

¹ These messages on the Lord Jesus Christ are available on the website www.godandtruth.com under the headings *The Lord Jesus Christ* (AR118-172) and *Reflections on the Death of Christ* (AR173-274). *The Two Kingdoms* is based on eight of these messages (AR132-139).

- o How should we view material wealth, power and positions of status and authority in a world where people strive to be rich, powerful, successful and prosperous?
- o What is true success and how can we live a successful life?

The kingdom of God and the fallen world

- To grasp the true meaning of our earthly existence, it is important that we understand the kingdom of God and the fallen world
- The kingdom of God is a central theme in the Scriptures and in the teaching of the Lord Jesus:
 - o The kingdom of God and its advancement is of primary importance to the Lord
 - o It endures forever
 - o What is not of God's kingdom will perish
 - o True ministry contributes to the advancement of God's kingdom
- Understanding this subject can help us:
 - o appreciate the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus, what He is concerned about and identify with what is in God's heart
 - o recognise what our values, perspective and approach to life ought to be
 - o know how we can live well in this fallen world without succumbing to the pervasive negative influence of the spirit of the world (e.g. in music, fashion, ambition, values)
 - o reflect on issues of life and respond to them from a biblical perspective
 - o be effective ambassadors for Christ
- It is my prayer that this book will help us discover in a deeper measure the meaning and joy of living in and for the kingdom of God – Your kingdom come

MAN OF FAITH

Introductory remarks

- It delights the heart of God when His children learn to truly walk by faith
- To live an abundant and fruitful life, we must walk by faith
- God's workman must learn to walk by faith

Questions about the life of faith

- What is true faith? How does one live by faith?
- Does having faith mean:
 - o Believing in the unseen?
 - o Believing without good reason and acting without understanding?
 - o Believing in something sincerely and firmly, with the preparedness to act on it?
- Why do we have to live by faith to gain God's approval?
- Where does faith come from and how does it grow?
- How can we exercise faith when we feel spiritually dry and God seems far away?
- Many may find this subject mysterious, difficult to understand and confusing – misconceptions abound

The book “Man of Faith”

- *Man of Faith* is a collection of eight messages
- It seeks to answer all the above questions from a biblical perspective
- It can contribute to an understanding of what biblical faith is, and how one can maintain unwavering faith and a heart on fire for God under all circumstances
- The eight messages were preached in a local congregation over a period of eight years (1980-87)
- Each message can be appreciated on its own, especially the last three messages
- The first five messages are a mini-series on faith and they lay the foundation for our understanding of this subject
- The two messages that follow are part of the message series *Appearance and Reality*, and they examine the subject of faith from the standpoint of Paul’s conversion and calling as an apostle, and of Joseph as a slave and prisoner
- The final message about a heart on fire was preached as a single message

Brief description of each message

- *Message 1* discusses what true faith is, and why it is an integral part of a life pleasing to God
- *Message 2* helps us see that the life of faith is a Christ-centred life. The beginning, the continuation and the consummation of the life of faith all centre on the Lord Jesus Christ
- *Message 3* points the way to how we can grow in quality of faith by discussing where faith comes from and how it grows
- *Message 4* considers faith in action, as illustrated in the lives of Mary and Moses
- *Message 5* considers the need to persevere in faith through puzzling and difficult situations, with a reflection on the Israelites’ deliverance from Egypt, and how we can work together with God in faith
- *In Message 6*, we seek to understand the heart of Paul before his “sudden” conversion, the meaning of his conversion, and the depth of his response to the Lord
 - o This can shed light on what constitutes a man of faith and how we can become men of faith
 - o Paul's unceasing zeal is a powerful testimony to how much the man of faith can accomplish in God’s kingdom by God's grace
- *In Message 7*, we reflect on Joseph as a man of faith, while still a slave and a prisoner - his life is a strong encouragement to us to walk by faith, even in the most trying of circumstances
- *Message 8* rounds up the book by viewing the man of faith as one whose heart burns for God - it considers what a heart on fire means, how it comes about and how it grows in intensity and meaning

Be a man of faith

- The man of faith walks in truth, in the ways of God, in fellowship with God, in Christ, in submission to Him
- Living by faith is a fundamental aspect of the Christian life
- It is my prayer that this book can help believers move towards a clearer understanding of what it means to live by faith

- May it challenge each one of us to become a man of faith – to live the kind of life God desires for all His children

Concluding remarks

- For many of us, we have devoted our lives to service, and the primary concern of our hearts is to be effective in service
- I raise for your prayerful consideration that the primary concern and motivation of your heart ought to be the four related areas:
 - (1) Knowing God and your relationship with God
 - (2) Knowing truth → men of truth who walk in deep fellowship with God in truth
 - (3) Knowing the Scriptures → ready, equipped for every good work
 - (4) Knowing Christ and walking in Him – Christ is God's primary provision for us
- Our primary concentration must be on these four fundamental areas throughout our lives
- They must never be neglected, but must grow from strength to strength, as they form the biblical basis for effective service and bearing fruit in every good work
- Many who serve the Lord suffer from stress, overstrain, burnout - there is much giving out without sufficient spiritual input – not how God intends it to be
- God's call to us: first to fellowship with Himself – so that our joy may be made full, and our walk with God expressed in joyous service
- The path of true discipleship will not be an easy life – but we can have joy and rest in the Lord in the midst of the trials – which are helpful for our learning
- Christ invites us to come to Him:

Matthew 11:28–29
 28 “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden,
 and I will give you rest.
 29 “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

 - o As we come to Christ and learn from Him and live out our lives in fellowship with Him, we can find true rest in Him
- We can have true peace from Christ and in Christ - our heart need not be troubled or fearful:

John 14:27
 “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you;
 not as the world gives do I give to you.
 Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.

James 1:2–4
 2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,
 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.
 4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.
- Deep relationship with God being a primary aspect of God's intentions for man and crucial to the fulfilment of God's purposes – we all would want to attain to such a relationship with God
- We would want to know the answer to the following questions:

- o Who has deep relationship with God?
- o How to attain to deep relationship with God?
- We should not just wait for it to happen
- In my understanding, lack of depth and meaning in relationship with God is a major factor in spiritual poverty, problems and failures in the lives of believers and the weakness of the universal church
- Grossly insufficient effective attention has been paid to this vital area
- There may be strong emphasis on service and much talk about honouring God and glorifying God, but if this vital area is in a poor state, other areas will not be able to work out well – even if outwardly they appear to be faring well
- Take time to reflect on the four fundamental aspects, consecrate our lives to God and be committed to working out these foundational areas
 - o This is God’s will and the biblical approach
 - o The basis for continuous growth with life and vitality
 - o The basis for effective, joyful service and bearing good fruit – under the Lord's guidance and His enabling
 - o The way to freedom from burnout
- May each one of us be like the tree firmly planted by streams of water in Ps. 1

Psalm 1

1 How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand in the path of sinners,
Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!

2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord,
And in His law he meditates day and night.

3 He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season
And its leaf does not wither;
And in whatever he does, he prospers.

4 The wicked are not so,
But they are like chaff which the wind drives away.

5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

6 For the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
But the way of the wicked will perish.

Hebrews 13:20–21

20 Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep
through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord,

21 equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight,
through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.