

# **GOD'S CALL**

## **Major themes in the Scriptures**

### **The wisdom of God (4)**

#### **Wisdom in meaning**

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The Lord willing, today we will consider the subject, “The wisdom of God” the fourth message, in seeking to appreciate major themes in the Scriptures.

A short summary of today’s message:

God is perfectly good and infinitely wise, yet His wisdom is often not appreciated because our values and goals are often very different from what is in His heart and what He wants to accomplish. This is seen in His wisdom expressed in the area of living by meaning.

We will seek the Lord to appreciate more of what this means.

God is a God of meaning and whatever He does is very, very rich in meaning. So if we want to know God, we want to live according to His ways, we need to understand more what this meaning means.

What is the meaning of living by meaning? Here as I seek to consider with you, I will be using this phrase to refer to living by what is the most meaningful path on the basis of moral and spiritual values and direction. That is to say, we make our choices on the basis of what is truly good and meaningful in the moral and spiritual realm. This of course will then be totally consistent with the character of God.

God does all things by what is truly meaningful in the moral and spiritual realm. The best example we can see of this is manifested in the event of the cross. The cross is a very, very meaningful event, difficult to understand but so important in what God wants to accomplish and so very helpful for each one of us.

It is only when we learn to live by meaning that we can find a meaningful life. If we do not do that, that would not be possible.

When I was a boy, I asked God repeatedly to give me a meaningful life; I prayed again and again. I did not quite know what a meaningful life would be; I just knew that life cannot be aimless and just existing day by day. There must be something meaningful; there must be a direction, a purpose. So I asked God to give me a meaningful life. I am very thankful, very grateful, that over the years He has answered my prayer and life has been very meaningful.

As I pondered over this, as I look back, I began to realize that when God answered my prayer, He was basically teaching me that if I want to have a meaningful life then I must live by meaning.

If we live by meaning, we will have a meaningful life.

If we do not live by meaning, what will we be living by?

Basically, we can say we will be living by self-centred desires; we will be living by what is more enjoyable or more pleasant, what the world can offer to us, or our natural inclinations.

If we do not live by meaning, we cannot be stable; we cannot be truly trustworthy.

Imagine a surgeon who is called up to perform an emergency operation and he says, "I do not feel like operating; I am very tired" and so he carries on sleeping and the patient dies – he lives by how he feels. Call up another surgeon who is equally tired: he immediately gets up; he says, "Yes, I am very tired but I must save this life" and so he operated and the patient survives.

Of course there are times when it is beyond us even when we want to do it, but here we are talking about what we can meaningfully and properly do.

How do we choose? What is the basis upon which we live our lives?

So today I want to consider with you this issue of living by meaning and God's wisdom in dealing with us to help us in this direction. I want to consider with you a man who very diligently sought to live by meaning and his life was meaningful; God appreciated him.

Let us turn to the **book of Job, chapter 1 verse 1:**

**Job 1: 1**

There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil.

This is a very good description of a man: blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil.

Notice that all these terms are moral terms: “blameless, upright” refers to his living his life on the basis of moral meaning, so that he could live a life that was good and right; “turning away from evil” is a rejection of all that is morally not good; “fearing God” is at the heart of it: because he feared God, he loved God, he trusted Him, he worshipped Him, he was able to move together with God in the right direction.

So in the description in the **book of Job** we can see that Job made very great efforts to live by these principles: to be morally upright, to turn away from evil, to be blameless in his conduct. He cared for people, he helped those who were in need, those who were helpless, and he constantly sought to be right with God. So here was a man of good quality, seeking constantly, diligently, to live by meaning.

**Job 1: 6-12**

- 6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.
- 7 The LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it."
- 8 The LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil."
- 9 Then Satan answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing?"
- 10 "Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.
- 11 "But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face."
- 12 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him." So Satan departed from the presence of the LORD.

This is a very interesting and very important situation – a conversation between the two most powerful beings in the universe: God who is perfectly good and the Creator of all things; Satan created with great power but rebelled against God.

God has allowed Satan to continue to live in this world and He has a purpose in allowing him to live in this world.

Satan is evil; he seeks to destroy but his power is limited by God: he can only do what God allows him to do, yet it is possible for Satan to cause great destruction in this world. If we do not take heed to what God has to say, if we do not abide by His instructions and depend on Him, we can easily be a victim of the evil one.

So God said to Satan: "From where do you come?" Satan's reply was: "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it." So notice: Satan is able to roam about on the earth and walk around on it. This means his power is great, he can travel fast, he can move to many different places and he has great power.

So God said to Satan: "Have you considered My servant Job?" Why did God ask such a question?

God appreciated Job; He wanted to see what Satan would do in that situation. Yes, of course God knew but He gave Satan an opportunity to attack Job in the situation, so that God could work out His purposes accordingly.

God Himself referred to Job as someone who was blameless and upright, fearing God and turning away from evil. So this is a very significant description. Satan's answer basically was: "Does Job fear God for nothing?" and so he says, "If You were to destroy the things that he possesses, he will surely curse You to Your face."

So basically Satan was saying Job fears God because he can benefit at the physical level. "You have given him so much in physical possessions, so that is why he fears You. He wants to receive more in the physical realm." So basically, Job is selfish. Job does not worship God because God is good. Job fears God because of what he could get for himself.

So the basic principle here is that Job was not living by meaning; he was living by selfish interests. That is what Satan was saying. "If You remove these things from him, he will curse You. So his worship is not true." So the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him."

So we know subsequently, Satan destroyed much of Job's possessions and family members.

So what happened after that?

**Job 1: 20-22**

- 20 Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped.
- 21 He said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD."
- 22 Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.

So here, we see Job's response proved Satan to be wrong. Although Satan destroyed his possessions, Job fell to the ground and worshipped God. He was prepared to accept whatever God might do in his life.

We can say Job recognized that God was good; he recognized that God was sovereign, so He had the right to decide how He would deal with him.

So we see that Job's response was based on meaning: he recognized God to be good, so he trusted Him; he recognized that God was sovereign, so he accepted God's decision. That was his response.

After this, we see again a conversation between God and Satan and this time, God allowed Satan to afflict Job's body and so he suffered greatly in his body; there was much pain and difficulties.

Again Job responded well: he did not blame God even though his wife urged him to be upset with God. And so again we see Job lived his life based on meaning.

But as we go on, as time passes by, we see something changing.

**Job 9: 14-17**

- 14 "How then can I answer Him, *And* choose my words before Him?
- 15 "For though I were right, I could not answer; I would have to implore the mercy of my judge.
- 16 "If I called and He answered me, I could not believe that He was listening to my voice.
- 17 "For He bruises me with a tempest And multiplies my wounds without cause.

Now here, we see a change in the way that Job was speaking. Now, he expressed words contrary to trusting God. He said, "If I called and He answered me, I could not believe that He was listening to my voice." That means: God would not care. "For He bruises me with a tempest And multiplies my wounds without cause." He was saying that God is not a just God.

Job was finding the situation very difficult. He could not understand what was happening to him: why was he suffering like that? He felt that God must be angry with him, punishing him, but he had done nothing wrong. Why should God punish him?

If we go on to read **Job 16: 11-14**, we will see another description where Job expressed his difficulty in the hands of God. In **verse 13**, he says, "His arrows surround me. Without mercy He splits my kidneys open; He pours out my gall on the ground." So to him, God was afflicting him without mercy, without cause, without justice.

**Job 19: 6-7**

- 6 Know then that God has wronged me And has closed His net around me.
- 7 "Behold, I cry, 'Violence!' but I get no answer; I shout for help, but there is no justice..."

These are very negative descriptions of God. Job said, "God has wronged me... I shout for help, but there is no justice..."

So then we may wonder: Why did Job say such things?

As we read the **book of Job**, we appreciate Job as a man, basically a man of integrity: a man who was honest, a man who spoke forthrightly. So he spoke in the anguish of his heart. He felt very difficult, he could not understand; he expressed his frustrations.

So we may say it is very understandable. What Job went through was very difficult and he was not aware that it was Satan who was afflicting him. So we can be and we should be very sympathetic towards Job – that it was a very difficult situation and it is understandable for him to respond that way.

But there are higher levels of living by meaning that we must appreciate.

Job had sought to live by meaning and it was of very good quality but it was not enough: And so we read **Job 38: 1-2**.

**Job 38: 1-2**

- 1 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said,
- 2 "Who is this that darkens counsel By words without knowledge?"

Here we see that God did not show that kind of gentleness and understanding which we might think ought to be shown towards a man suffering so greatly. Instead, God rebuked him: "Who is this that darkens counsel By words without knowledge?"

**Job 40: 1-2**

- 1 Then the LORD said to Job,
- 2 "Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who reproves God answer it."

So God described Job as a faultfinder and he was contending with the Almighty, he was reproving God, and God said, "Let him... answer it."



So we see that God was displeased with Job for his conduct. It was wrong and God reproved him, rebuked him.

So then as we look at this picture we may wonder: Why is it that Job changed? He was so positive: he worshipped God; he was prepared to accept God's decisions. Why is it that now he was complaining, he was blaming God, he was attributing wrong to God?

Here we see a very important principle for all of us to ponder over. When we choose to live by meaning, we must ponder over the implications of the meaning that we believe in.

We must ponder over the implications right to the very end.

Sometimes, we think of meaning up to a limited point and then we may not go further. But if we want to live by meaning effectively, we must not be afraid to consider the meaning to its ultimate end: What does it mean?

So when we say that God is good, what does it mean? When we say we trust Him, what does it mean? This is something that often we may not be so appreciative of. We trust God – yes, up to a point. We say God is good – yes, in certain circumstances.

And this was precisely the issue that Satan was raising: Job trusted God, feared God because of what he could get – now things are taken away, Job is going to be upset. So initially, we see that Job was not upset, he worshipped God; but later he became upset and he blamed God.

But then we may say, "But Job did not understand that it was Satan who was afflicting him and so because he misunderstood, he thought that it was God who was afflicting him, and so he blamed God."

If we look at the context, it will become clear to us that throughout this whole episode, Job knew that God was good; he knew that God was perfect and he could not blame God if he were to live by meaning.

We look at **Job 23: 3-7**.

**Job 23: 3-7**

- 3 "Oh that I knew where I might find Him, That I might come to His seat!
- 4 "I would present *my* case before Him And fill my mouth with arguments.
- 5 "I would learn the words *which* He would answer, And perceive what He would say to me.
- 6 "Would He contend with me by the greatness of *His* power? No, surely He would pay attention to me.
- 7 "There the upright would reason with Him; And I would be delivered forever from my Judge.

So this tells us that Job was very clear God is good, God is perfect, God is just and God will listen if we have good grounds to bring before Him. The upright can reason with Him and if our case is right, God will deliver us.

So Job knew and yet, you compare this with **Job 9: 16**: "If I called and He answered me, I could not believe that He was listening to my voice."

So we see a contradiction. In one situation, Job said, "God will surely listen to me"; in another, he said, "I could not believe that He was listening to me." In one situation he said: "...the upright would reason with Him"; in another situation he said, "He multiplies my wounds without cause... Without mercy He splits my kidneys open... God has wronged me... there is no justice".

Why the contradiction?

We need to be very sober to think about this.

It is something that can readily happen to any one of us in our walk with God: We believe many right things but we may not live by them. We may not be true to what we believe.

Often we may say we are not so conscious of it but very often the consciousness of what is good and right takes place in a context of nurturing a right walk with God. The more we live by what is right, the more conscious we will be.

So we can say that Job lost some degree of his consciousness of who God was and what was the right path.

Why did he lose that consciousness?

Basically, we can say: he lost his focus; he shifted his focus from God to himself and his circumstances and his difficulties.

When his focus was on God, he appreciated God – God is upright, God is good, God is trustworthy; he could walk with Him whatever the situation.

But when that focus was lost, he shifted to himself, his situation, he began to complain: “God is not fair to me. I have not sinned, why should He treat me like that?” But that is a contradiction. God is fair; he knows that God is fair, so then how could he blame God? So he should never come to the point of saying that “God has wronged me”.

Then we may say that he did not know that it was Satan who was afflicting him.

But throughout the book until the end, we do not see that it was explained to him that it was Satan who was afflicting him. And yet, Job responded positively when God spoke to him out of the whirlwind. God did not speak about Satan. God only revealed himself to Job and contrasted himself with Job, and Job responded because his focus shifted back to God.

As he beheld God, as he became conscious of who God was and what was the right response, Job repented.

So we see how God rebuked Job in **Job 40: 6-8**.

**Job 40: 6-8**

- 6 Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm and said,
- 7 "Now gird up your loins like a man; I will ask you, and you instruct Me.
- 8 "Will you really annul My judgment? Will you condemn Me that you may be justified?

So in effect what Job was doing was to annul the judgment of God, was condemning God so that he might be justified. So the focus shifted to the self, and led to his wrong judgment about God.

If Job had maintained that consciousness of living by meaning - and in that context, the meaning remained the same: God is always good, God is always just, God's judgments are always right - if Job maintained that, he would not have said those words that he did.

However as we read **Job 42: 7-8**, we see God's final response:

**Job 42: 7-8**

- 7 It came about after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends, because you have not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has.
- 8 "Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves, and My servant Job will pray for you. For I will accept him so that I may not do with you *according to your* folly, because you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has."

So here God said: "...you have not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has". So God was saying that Job said the right things. So on the one hand God rebuked Job for what was wrong; yet here He was telling the three friends of Job that Job said the right things. He also told the three friends to go to Job and Job would pray for them and God would accept Job. Why is that so?

So what is it that God appreciated in Job? What was it that Job said that was right?

First we notice that in **Job 42: 1-6**, Job acknowledged that he was wrong. He said, "Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know... Therefore I retract, And I repent in dust and ashes."

Job repented. He recognized that he was wrong; he spoke beyond what was proper for him – things that he did not understand.

So when God rebuked him, Job acknowledged he was wrong, he repented. This is very significant. If Job had not repented, if he had insisted that he was right then the consequences would be very different; God's judgment would fall upon him.

This tells us that within the heart of Job, although he said all those things that were wrong, deep within his heart he truly loved God. He continued to want to live by meaning but he was perplexed, he found it very difficult to carry on that way.

Likewise **Job 13: 15**, Job said, "Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. Nevertheless I will argue my ways before Him..." So Job trusted God: Even if God were to slay him, he would still hope in Him.

**Job 23: 10**

"But He knows the way I take; *When* He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

So this tells us that Job had some idea that God was testing him, God was trying him, God was refining him so that he would come forth as gold.

So it is not that Job was ignorant of all this. He understood God's ways were perfect, that God would deal with him to bring about a good outcome: "*When* He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold."

But the situation was too difficult. He found it very difficult to go on; he cried out to God and God did not seem to answer him, and so he was frustrated and he said those things that he did.

But God saw his heart. God knew that deep in the heart of Job, he loved God; he wanted to be true to Him.

And so God said Job had spoken right about Him.

So basically we can see Job sought to be honest, he expressed his difficulties but he said things that were wrong, he lost his focus; but he wanted still to choose and to do what was good and right.

So as we think of living by meaning, we must be careful to consider what is the most important meaning that we want in our lives.

As we recognize what is truly good and the full implications of that then that must be the guiding principle of all that we do. No other situation should contradict this: the reality of what is truly good. And what is truly good is in the moral and spiritual realm.

The physical circumstances of our lives, they may change but the moral meaning of things and what ought to be remain the same.

So if we are preoccupied with the physical and material world then we can easily be led astray, we can become inconsistent, we can become unfaithful to God. So we need to know what is important to God, what is truly good and meaningful and then we can be peaceful in the way that we go through each situation of life.

In the Old Testament, God tells us through his prophet that God will strongly support those whose heart is completely His. This is a very precious verse, very encouraging to all who love God.

But as we consider further: what if this verse were not present in the Old Testament? Can we still believe in that? The answer is: Yes.

This verse is helpful but we do not need this verse to know that. If we know the character of God, we will know that this must be true: If our heart is completely His, then it means we worship Him, we will follow Him, we trust Him, we will live by His laws and principles. If that is the case, surely God will strongly support us to live that way. So that must be true.

In the New Testament, we have a similar verse that is very encouraging and Christians quote it regularly:

**Romans 8: 28**

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.

God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God... If this verse were not present in the New Testament, can we believe this meaning? The answer is: Yes.

If we know God's character, we will know that this must be true. God will cause all things to work together for good to those who love God. If we love God, it means we love what is good, we love what is right and God will cause all things that take place in our lives to bring about a good conclusion, a good effect.

And what is that good effect? That good effect is not primarily in the physical realm, although it does involve the physical. The good is basically in the moral and spiritual realm. If we love God, the outcome of our lives will be morally and spiritually good.

"...to those who are called according to *His* purpose..." If we love God and we are called according to *His* purpose then we can be sure that God will cause all things to work together for good.

This is true no matter what happens to us. Whatever the physical situation, circumstances, may be, this is always true. If this is always true, we can always be peaceful, we can always be satisfied; we can always have confidence that the path will be good.

I want to share with you a song that may bring across some of these issues we are considering. It is entitled "Suddenly".

Things in our lives, situations, can change very suddenly. Sometimes the change happens in a way that takes us by surprise and it can happen in a very pleasant way or very unpleasant way.

However, in the midst of changing situations, whatever they may be, we can always have the confidence that God remains good, we can always trust Him, we can always walk in His perfect will. Whatever the situation may be, God remains the same in His moral perfection and this is the confidence that we should have.

However, it does not mean that God's moral perfection is always expressed in the same way, in the same circumstances. God expresses Himself in His relationship with us, depending on how we respond as well as depending on the circumstances that we are in.

So for example, when we go through very difficult times and we find it very difficult to go on, we may sometimes wonder: Does God care? The answer obviously must be: Of course He cares, and He may shed tears in fellowship with us, knowing how difficult it is for us.

At other times, when life is so joyful and meaningful in the physical realm, we may see God smiling, seeing us so happy.

So God identifies with us, He cares, and if we understand this, it will help us whatever situation that we may go through.



So I will sing this song to you, hoping that it may help us to draw nearer to God.

### **Suddenly**

One day, the skies began to darken!

Dark clouds gathered all of a sudden:

Stress and distress like thundering rain...

My life would never be the same again!

In the darkness, I see His face:

His love, His tears, always His grace!

His perfect will I love and know...

Is always good for me to grow!

One day, the skies began to brighten!

The sun appeared all of a sudden:

Joy and delight like flowering spring...

I run with the Lord with a hearty spring!

In the brightness, I see His face:

His love, His smile, always His grace!

His perfect will I've come to trust...

Is always good for all of us!

Sometimes, we go through difficult times; at other times, we go through very pleasant times. Whichever it is, there is a meaning that God wants to impart to us.

If we go through it well with Him, we will increasingly appreciate that God's will is perfect. If we love Him, it will help us to go through in such a way that the outcome will be good for us as well as in our influence on other people.

So whether it be in a situation that we may call darkness or in a situation that we may call brightness, God's love is the same, His grace is always there. At times He sheds tears in compassion; at other times He smiles to see us so happy.

If we live by meaning, we will always appreciate what God is doing and we will be able to rejoice in Him and be happy in Him in all kinds of circumstances.

As we think of **Romans 8: 28**, we can appreciate that this verse tells us that God will cause all things to work together for good no matter what the situation may be. The only issue that we need to make sure of is that we truly love God, we are called according to *His* purpose, we are walking in His will, we are prepared to obey Him and walk with Him.

What is it that God really requires of us?

**Micah 6: 6-8**

- 6 With what shall I come to the LORD *And* bow myself before the God on high?  
Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, With yearling calves?
- 7 Does the LORD take delight in thousands of rams, In ten thousand rivers of oil?  
Shall I present my firstborn *for* my rebellious acts, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
- 8 He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you  
But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?

Micah first talks about the physical aspect – are these the things that are important: burnt offerings, ten thousand rivers of oil?

This is not what God is looking for.

So he says, “He has told you, O man, what is good” – this is what God is concerned about: what is good, and this is not “good” in the physical sense.

When God created the earth, He said it was “good” but that “good” is different from this “good”. That “good” refers to the physical: that it functions well, it is in accordance with God’s purpose.

The “good” here refers to the moral and the spiritual: “He has told you, O man, what is good” and then he elaborates: “And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?”

These are all in the moral and spiritual realm. These are just some expressions, some aspects of this direction and meaning.

So no matter what we may know or not know; no matter how we may develop, to whatever degree, this is the basic, the fundamental, and the ultimately most important: Do we love justice, is there true kindness in our lives, are we walking humbly with our God; and all the other aspects consistent with that?

If this is not true in our lives, then all other things that we do or know will not help us in the eternal context. God will not be pleased with us because this is what truly matters to Him.

If we want to have a meaningful life, we must live by meaning in the moral and spiritual realm.

Finally, I want to consider with you an example of a man who lived by meaning and God appreciated him, and how he made his choices.

**Hebrews 11: 24-26**

- 24 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,
- 25 choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,
- 26 considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.

Here we see clearly Moses lived on the basis of meaning. "...when he had grown up, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter..." That was such a powerful position, that was a context that would give him so much glory, honour and pleasure in this world, but he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. It was a very deliberate decision; he chose this path.

"...choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin..."

We see the contrast: living by meaning or living by the pleasures of this world, living by our feelings.

Moses chose to endure ill-treatment with the people of God rather than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin. How many people would be prepared to do that? But Moses was very clear in terms of what mattered to him. It was not that he preferred ill-treatment; he chose that path because of its meaning.

**Verse 26** explains to us the meaning: considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward. What was he looking for?

He was looking for the reward that God would give to him in the moral and spiritual realm. He wanted to be true to God; he wanted to be truly close to God; he wanted to live a life that would be meaningful in the eyes of God, that he could in eternity have deep fellowship with God.

So he considered the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. The treasures of Egypt were great treasures as far as the world was concerned, but Moses chose the reproach of Christ because that is where the meaning is in the moral and spiritual realm.

So this is something for all of us to consider: What is the basis of our life? What would we choose? How would we live?

Would we choose to live by meaning or by feeling: choose to live by moral and spiritual principles of goodness in the kingdom of God, or choose to live by what the world can offer us and what we can enjoy in this world?

There are many people who are willing to suffer in order to gain a greater enjoyment. Many people are prepared to train very hard, suffer pain in their bodies and deprive themselves of many enjoyable activities in order to train to be a football star, to be a tennis champion or to achieve something else in this world. So they are prepared to go through suffering in order to gain something in this world that they enjoy and is important to them.

So likewise there are those who are prepared to go through the dangers of climbing Mount Everest, so that they can be one of those who have reached the top. That is their reward in this world.

What about us? What kind of reward do we want? Are we also seeking for this kind of reward or will we seek for the eternal reward: that which is most pleasing in the eyes of God?

Do we have, at the heart of what we are doing and pursuing, the desire to bring joy to the heart of God, that He may be pleased with the way we live our lives, and we can contribute something towards what He wants to accomplish in His creation of this universe?

So the conversation between God and Satan is a representation of an underlying issue that is taking place all the time.

God is always seeking to perfect us; God is always seeking to help us to rise to a higher level. Satan is always trying to destroy us, draw us away from God, cause us to indulge in selfishness and the self-seeking ways.

We must choose: Whom do we follow? What is the path that we want to take?

So although initially it seemed as if Satan succeeded because Job complained about God, we see at the end of it God was truly pleased with Job.

Although Job faltered, he learnt from his failures and God worked in his life and God blessed him. Subsequently God restored the fortunes of Job and God helped him to go on for many more years to come.

So we can say in that incident, Satan failed because Job responded well ultimately.

So too for all of us: We may have faltered along the way, there may be problems that we have not resolved effectively but if we are prepared to learn, if we are humble and walk with God, prepared to be corrected, then we also can develop well, and God wants to help us to rise to the highest plane of living.

So we see the wisdom of God expressed in the area of living by meaning.

God wants to teach us to live by meaning, whatever the circumstances that we go through.

If we learn well, we will be able to walk with God in whatever circumstances that He may bring us through or situations that the evil one may thrust upon us in order to afflict us, in the context of God's permission.

Let us then as we come before the Lord, ask Him to help us to appreciate more deeply what this means and how we can effectively live in a manner that will be truly pleasing to God and we will be able to find a truly meaningful life on earth and in eternity.