

Job:
A Man Who Lost Everything
Except For His Faith



Hosted by the Southaven Church of Christ
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Dedication

It is an honor to dedicate this lectureship book to Curtis A. Cates and his cherished wife Annette. They have repeatedly refreshed “my spirit and yours” (1 Cor. 16:18; cf. 2 Tim. 1:16). They continue to be like “cold waters to a thirsty soul” (Pro. 25:25). In keeping with Paul’s inspired instructions, the following words are written to acknowledge “them that are such.”

Like so many who attended the Memphis School of Preaching, I cannot think of the book of Job without thinking about brother Cates. Few, if any, have explored the depths of the book like he has. I do not believe that you have ever really studied the book of Job until you have sat at his feet and heard him teach it. What a unique privilege was ours as students at MSOP. It seems most appropriate that this volume on Job be dedicated to him and to his sweet wife Annette.

Brother and sister Cates joined forces on October 29, 1960. Together, they have been an unstoppable couple for Christ. Countless men, including their own sons Andy and Dan, are preaching the gospel today as a result of their efforts and encouragement. As the son of a gospel preacher, brother Cates grew up with a love for preaching and for preachers. His love for both has never diminished. Even after more than fifty years of preaching, and almost that many years in training preachers, he has a fire in his bones that cannot be contained (Jer. 20:9). Brother Cates preaches, teaches, and lives with enthusiasm.

Those who have been in brother Cates’ classes know what a unique experience it is. His style cannot be imitated. For one thing, no one can stretch out the words *well* and *brethren* like brother Cates. I am from Alabama, brother Cates’ home state, and I cannot even do it. Furthermore, who can forget the hand motions and the facial expressions that filled his lectures? Brother Cates’ classes were many things, but they were never boring. They were chock-full of animation and information. Often, some of the best material in our

notes was when we left the assigned text and pursued a connecting thought. I can still hear brother Cates telling us to put a peg down. The peg would ensure that we knew where to begin again. Then, like a seasoned guide, brother Cates would take us down a little-known trail and show us a sight that other guides and travelers did not even know existed. Some teachers, like me, have to stay right with our notes, because we are uncomfortable getting off the beaten path. However, brother Cates was never so limited. He teaches and preaches from the overflow of a life of study. He knows the book from cover to cover. He is a student of the Scriptures. I can remember while a student in school seeing brother Cates standing at the copier, for what seemed like hours, making copies of materials in preparation for a trip out of town. Even when he was on the road, brother Cates was studying. He was preparing an article, a manuscript, or a sermon. He was growing in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:18). When he got home, our class would be the beneficiaries of his study. Today, our brotherhood continues to be blessed by his preaching, teaching, writing, and editing.

In school, when brother Cates started writing on the chalkboard, you had better keep up. After all, the markings were not going to mean much when they got cold. As he was talking, brother Cates would write the first letter of a word on the board. Rather than spelling out the word, he would just draw a line to complete it. Brother Cates did not have to worry about making the blunder that Vice President Dan Quayle made a few years ago. After all, if brother Cates had written the word *potato* on the board, it would have simply been a p with a line following it. It was up to us to know how to spell things. Two words that I still remember after all these years are *pericope* and *kerygma*. I am pretty sure they were simply written in my notes as a p and as a k followed by a line. As you might imagine, my notes contained many such notations. Of course, letters followed by lines are not very helpful in preparing for tests. I was never brave enough to answer a question on one of brother Cates' tests with a letter and a line, but you know that I was tempted. I am confident that I would have gotten it right. After all, brother Cates knew what it meant, even if I did not.

Brother Cates' tests were unforgettable. I can assure you that I have tried to forget them, but they still haunt my memory. The Genesis Flood test contained one question, but it was a real doozy (I selected that last word just for brother Cates). "Tell me all you know about ***The Genesis Flood.***" That was the one question that stood between me and failure. I was pretty sure that I was not going to be one of the eight souls saved that day. I did, however, feel as if the fountains of the deep had been broken up. By the Genesis Flood, brother Cates did not mean Genesis 6-8. That would have been easy. He meant the 518 page book, **The Genesis Flood**, by John C. Whitcomb, Th.D. and Henry M. Morris, Ph.D. It is a brilliant book, written by brilliant men. However, it was being read and remembered by an ordinary student, fresh out of high school. I remember looking up every other word in the dictionary to try to make sense of what I was reading. It was a very slow read. In fact, my pace was about a page a night. I would read one page and then rest my brain for about 6 hours until the next morning. I still have never found a better sleep-aid than that book. Obviously, I did not know a lot about the Genesis Flood. However, I did find grace.

Another test that I remember was on the book of Proverbs. This time, the test consisted of more than one question. In fact, it contained six specific topics, upon which we were to produce six full sermon outlines in three hours. Even today, after years of sermon preparation, I cannot prepare one sermon outline in three hours. However, that day, the juices were flowing. I produced six in three hours. Of course, all six combined would not have made one decent sermon. Thankfully, they were graded on the same gracious curve that had been used with the Genesis Flood test.

Brother and sister Cates are graduates of the University of Alabama. Their blood, like mine, flows crimson. Therefore, it seems appropriate to use a few Bear Bryant quotes before this dedication is done. On one occasion, Coach Bryant remarked, "The idea of molding men means a lot to me." On another occasion, he continued the thought by saying, "Sacrifice. Work. Self-discipline. I teach these things, and my boys don't forget them when they leave." The Bear was known for getting ordinary players to do extraordinary things.

In the words of Bryant, “You take those little rascals, talk to them good, pat them on the back, let them think they are good, and they will go out and beat the biguns.” Bear Bryant was able to get more out of his players than most coaches because he made them feel special. On one occasion, he addressed his team with these words: “What are you doing here? Tell me why you are here. If you are not here to win a national championship, you’re in the wrong place. You boys are special...You are going to win the national championship for Alabama.” Bear Bryant changed the landscape of college football and made Alabama into the powerhouse that it is today. Many measure the Bear’s success by games and championships won—323 victories, 24 Consecutive Bowl Games, 14 Conference Titles, 3 Undefeated Seasons, and 6 National Championships. Others measure his success by personal awards he received. For example, he was named National Coach of the Year 3 times and SEC Coach of the Year 10 times. As impressive as these things are, I believe that Coach Bryant measured his success differently. For him, it was more about the men that he molded than it was about him. Sixty-seven of his players won All-American honors and a host of them went on to successful NFL careers (Joe Namath, Ken Stabler, Ozzie Newsome, Lee Roy Jordan, etc).

Molding men and teaching them sacrifice, work, and self-discipline has meant a lot to brother Cates as well. After all, he has molded a number of men over the years, including me. Like Coach Bryant, brother Cates took ordinary men, made them feel special, and got them to perform above their abilities. He had high expectations for the Memphis School of Preaching and for the students who attended it. The school is what it is today, and many of its graduates are what they are today, because of the influence and instruction of Curtis A. Cates. Molding men has meant a lot to him and to sister Cates. Their success cannot be measured in games or titles won. It cannot be measured in personal honors received. It can only be measured by the men that they have molded over the years. As one of these men, I express my sincere thanks to both of them.

Acknowledgments

Famed Coach Paul Bear Bryant once remarked, “If you want to coach you have three rules to follow to win. One, surround yourself with people who can’t live without football. I’ve had a lot of them. Two, be able to recognize winners. They come in all forms. And, three, have a plan for everything. A plan for practice, a plan for the game. A plan for being ahead, and a plan for being behind 20-0 at half, with your quarterback hurt and the phones dead, with it raining cats and dogs and no rain gear because the equipment manager left it at home.”

I can certainly relate to these three rules. First, I have surrounded myself by people who love the Lord. It is a joy to work with those who are as passionate about spiritual things as I try to be. I am blessed to work with great elders (Con, Larry, Vern), great secretaries (Shelley, Wanda, Laurie), and a great technical staff (John, Paul, Rick). Second, I have recognized some winners and put them on the program. Each year, speakers come in and present lessons that exceed even the highest expectations that I have for them. Each year, I grow from reading the manuscripts that are submitted. Third, I have a plan for everything; and her name is April Meacham. At times, I have felt as if we were behind 20-0 at the half, with our quarterback hurt, with dead phones, and in a downpour with no rain gear. I routinely thought of Job’s words: “For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me” (Job 3:25). However, as I have come to expect, April stepped up and squeezed out a victory. Paul and the staff at Sain Publications also helped tremendously by getting the book printed before the clock ran out.

Let me conclude with one more observation from Bear Bryant; after all, it is a championship year. In classic fashion, Coach Bryant once quipped, “If anything goes bad, I did it. If anything goes semi-good, we did it. If anything goes really good, then you did it. That’s all it takes to get people to win football games for you.” If this project

turns out badly, and I really hope it does not, then I did it. If it turns out semi-good, then we did it; and, if it turns out really good, then the credit belongs to those that I have acknowledged above. To God be the glory!

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CHAPTER 1

Job: A Man Who Lost Everything Except For His Faith

Wade Webster

Men know Job for his patience. James, the half-brother of Jesus, declared, “Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy” (King James Version, Jam. 5:11). James was confident that those of his day had heard of the patience of Job. He felt no need to recite the story. He simply referred to the man and knew that they would get the message. After all, Job was synonymous with patience.

How did Job become known for his patience? How did he get this reputation? I believe that the first chapter of James offers some insight. James wrote, “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience” (Jam. 1:2-3). Please note that the “trying of” our “faith worketh patience.” *Katertzomai*, the Greek word that is translated as “worketh” in this passage means “to bring about” or “to produce” (Zodhiates). Thus, the trying of faith is what brings about or produces patience. Job’s patience was brought about or produced by the trying of his faith.

The trial of Job’s faith could not have been greater. The only thing that was withheld from Satan was the taking of Job’s life (Job 2:6). No doubt, Satan stopped just one lash short of that. Because Job’s faith was great, his trial was great. Because his trial was great,

the patience produced was great. Because the patience produced was great, the name or reputation that Job received from it was great. For sure, the reputation of patience was earned. As you recall, after Satan stole Job's camels/cattle, scorched his sheep, slaughtered his servants, and slew his children, Job arose, rent his mantle, shaved his head, fell down upon the ground, and worshipped (Job 1:20). Rather than cursing God as Satan said that he would do, Job blessed God (Job 1:21). Even after Satan afflicted him with sores and assaulted him through his spouse, Job remained steadfast. He lost everything, except for his faith.

Satan could take away Job's cattle, Job's camels, and Job's children, but not Job's confidence. He could take away his asses, but not his assurance. He could take away his things, but not his trust. He could take away the support of his friends, but not the substance of his faith. Although sorely tested, Job's faith passed the test. In all, I believe that Job's faith passed six tests.

The Test of Purity

The opening verse of the book informs us that Job was "upright," "feared God," and "eschewed evil" (Job 1:1). It is amazing to me that Satan did not try Job through one of the avenues involving the flesh. He did not try the "lust of the flesh" or the "lust of the eyes" (1 John 2:15-17). As you recall, he tried the faith of other great men like Joseph and David in this way (Gen. 39:7-15; 2 Sam. 11:1-4). Of course, he was successful in getting David to fall. Why did he not try these avenues with Job? Likely, he did. However, they are not recorded in the book of Job. It may be that they took place prior to the events recorded in the book. The description of Job that is found in the opening verse of the book reveals that Job had passed this test. He was a righteous man. He revered God and he resisted evil. Job had guarded his heart against lust and other sins of the flesh. Later in the book, he declared, "I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?" (Job 31:1). He continued, "If mine heart have been deceived by a woman, or if I have laid wait at my neighbor's door; Then let my wife grind unto another,

and let others bow down upon her. For this is an heinous crime; yea, it is an iniquity to be punished by the judges. For it is a fire that consumeth to destruction, and would root out all mine increase” (Job 31:9-12). It could be that Satan knew all of this about Job and decided to attack him at a weaker place. We must be aware that he might employ this approach in attacking us. Like Job, we must “abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Pet. 2:11; cf. Col. 3:5). We must deny “ungodliness” and “live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Tit. 2:12). We must also make a covenant with our eyes not to look on a woman to lust after her (Mat. 5:28).

The Test Of Prosperity

In the opening verses of the book, we learn that Job was extremely rich. He had seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses (Job 1:3). Furthermore, he was rich in servants (Job 1:3). Although we are not told that Job’s riches were a test of his faith, we know that they were. You might think of his riches as the test before the test. After all, those who are rich are tempted to be “highminded” and to “trust in uncertain riches” rather than in “the living God” (1 Tim. 6:17). They are tempted to “deny” God (Pro. 30:17-19). No doubt, Satan had watched Job closely to see how he would handle his riches. At least, we know that he was well aware of how Job’s substance had increased (Job 1:10). If Satan was watching Job, and I am convinced that he was, he did not like what he saw. Although Job was rich, his trust was not in his riches. His trust was in God. He continually “offered burnt offerings” for his family (Job 1:5). We must be aware that Satan will employ this same approach with us. He will try to get us to fall in love with the world and the things of the world (1 John 2:15-17). He will try to convince us that we can serve two masters—God and mammon (Mat. 6:24). Like Job, we must continue to place our trust in God. We must “beware of covetousness,” realizing that “a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15).

The Test Of Poverty

When Job passed the test of prosperity, Satan threw the opposite at him. He tested Job's faith by poverty (Pro. 30:7-9). Methodically, Satan took away almost everything that Job possessed (Job 1:10-19; Job 2:4-10). He began by taking away Job's substance and his servants. Satan left a single servant each time that Job's substance was decreased to bear the bad news to him (Job 1:15-17; Job 1:19). Once Satan had taken away Job's substance, and most of his servants, he took away Job's sons and daughters. All ten were taken from him in a single day (Job 1:18-19). It seems that Satan only spared Job's wife and friends to use them in further tempting and tormenting Job (Job 2:9-10; Job 16:2). When taking away Job's substance, servants, and children did not destroy Job's faith, Satan went after Job's skin. He took away his health by smiting him with "sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown" (Job 2:7). In spite of all that he lost, Job continued to trust God (Job 2:9-10). As noted in the introduction, Satan could take away everything except for Job's faith. Although Satan may not be able to bring us to poverty in the way that he did Job, he will use the setbacks and losses of life to try to undermine and destroy our faith. He will try to get us to blame God for what has been taken away.

The Test Of Persecution

The next test that Job faced was that of persecution. Although persecution from any source is bad, it is far worse when it comes from one's own household (Mat. 10:36). Job's own wife encouraged him to "curse God, and die" (Job 2:9). No doubt, this was a heavy blow to Job. Of all people, he expected and needed her support. However, his helpmeet was helping someone else. No doubt, that is the reason why Satan spared her when he took away the rest of Job's family. Not only did Job lose the support of his wife, he lost the support of his friends. He lost the support of those who should have stuck closer than a brother (Pro. 18:24). Instead of telling him to curse God, Job's friends believed that he had already done so. They believed that he was suffering for his sins. They were convinced that he was cursed of

God. Eliphaz explained that no man ever perished being innocent. He believed that Job was reaping what he had sown (Job 4:7-8; cf. Gal. 6:7-8). Bildad, another buddy, explained that God does not pervert justice. He declared that Job's children had been cast away because they were sinners (Job 8:3-4). Zophar, a third friend, informed Job that God had actually exacted of him less than his iniquity deserved (Job 11:3-6). With friends like these, Job did not need any enemies. In spite of being falsely accused by those closest to him, Job's faith did not falter. Satan still uses this approach among God's servants today. Paul declared, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12; cf. Mat. 5:10-12). We must not allow any of these things to move us (Acts 20:24).

The Test Of Perplexity

It is one thing to maintain faith when everything makes sense. However, it is quite another to do so when nothing makes sense. It seems clear that Job did not know why all of these things were happening to him. Yet, he did not lose faith. He continued to trust in God completely. In the thirteenth chapter, he declared, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him" (Job 13:15). Even though Job did not understand what was going on, he trusted God. I am reminded of what Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego told King Nebuchadnezzar. When the king gave them a second chance to bow down to his image and to save their lives, they declared, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (Dan. 3:16-18). Like Job, the three Hebrew youths were going to serve God no matter what happened to them. Of course, Abraham demonstrated the same kind of faith. When God told him to offer his only son Isaac upon the altar, he climbed the mountain to do so (Gen. 22:1-14). Although Abraham did not know how God was going to keep His promises, He was confident that He

would (Gen. 22:1-14; Heb. 11:17-19). For sure, there will be some things today that we will not understand. However, we need to hold to the hand of God with confidence that He will clear the way for us.

The Test Of Power

The final test that Job faced was that of power. As you know, many people cannot handle power (3 John 9-10; 1 Tim. 3:6). However, it proved to be no problem for Job. At the end of the book, Job was vindicated in the presence of his friends. Those who had accused him of great wrong were now in need of great forgiveness. They had to go to Job and to ask him to offer sacrifices and prayers on their behalf (Job 42:7-8). Job now had the power. What would he do? Would he refuse to help them? As hard as it must have been from a human standpoint, Job made intercession for his friends. When he did so, his captivity was turned (Job 42:9-10) and God blessed him tremendously (Job 42:12-13). Today, Satan may try our faith in the same way that he tried Job's. He may try us with power. For example, he may see whether or not we will forgive those who have wronged us (Luke 17:3-5). If we will not forgive, then he knows that we cannot be forgiven (Mat. 6:14-15).

Satan now has us in his sights. No doubt, he will test our faith in the same ways that he tested Job's. How will we do? Will our faith pass the tests of purity, prosperity, poverty, persecution, perplexity, and power? Will we, like Job, come forth as gold (Job 23:10)?

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CHAPTER 2

Between the Hedges: God's Care, Satan's Charge, Job's Complaint

Dan Cates

What another great opportunity to be associated with the Southaven congregation of the Lord's church this is for the writer! It is always a pleasure to be able to visit with you and both share with you and be benefitted by others' sharing the great lessons from the Word of God. Thanks is extended to the elders of this congregation, Larry Everson, Con Lambert, and Vern Schrimsher for the invitation to be a part of this lectureship and to Wade Webster for his assigning the particular topic at hand in this study of the superb Bible person Job! The writer would also like to take just a moment to express appreciation to those involved for dedicating this year's lectureship book to his father, Curtis A. Cates, Sr.—the writer is blessed to be his son!

Introduction

The subject of this lecture is "Between the Hedges: God's Care, Satan's Charge, Job's Complaint." As a college football fan, and especially as a Georgia Bulldogs fan, the writer is well aware of the significance of being "between the hedges." In college football vernacular, that is a reference to one's having to go to Athens, Georgia, to play against the tenacious Dawgs surrounded by English privet hedges originally placed in 1929. In the fall, one does not generally desire to make a trip to do battle "between the hedges." As a student

of the Bible, one will remember another hedge; not, however, English privet hedges, but an alleged border protecting God's servant Job from none other foe than the devil himself! One reads of this hedge in Job 1:10 and Job 3:23 (King James Version). In the former, the one observing the context reads,

Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath *is* in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD. (Job 1:9-12)

In the latter, he reads,

After this opened Job his mouth, and cursed his day. And Job spake, and said, Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night *in which* it was said, There is a man child conceived. Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it. Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it; let a cloud dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it. As *for* that night, let darkness seize upon it; let it not be joined unto the days of the year, let it not come into the number of the months. Lo, let that night be solitary, let no joyful voice come therein...Why died I not from the womb?... Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery,

and life unto the bitter *in* soul; Which long for death, but it *cometh* not; and dig for it more than for hid treasures; Which rejoice exceedingly, *and* are glad, when they can find the grave? *Why is light given* to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in? For my sighing cometh before I eat, and my roarings are poured out like the waters. For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me. I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet; yet trouble came. (Job 3:1-7; Job 3:11; Job 3:20-26)

One will notice in these passages the setting for the great struggle, yea, battle, of this book. Between the hedges, which Satan says that God has erected, there is a battlefield—note that Job is not one of the combatants, of whom are Satan and God; rather, Job is the very battlefield. The writer marvels when he sees images of battlefields: scarred and scoured earth, enveloped with smoke and gas, riddled with shrapnel, pocked with craters, lined with trenches, carpeted with spent ammunition, charred by fire, puddled with blood, covered by the slaughtered of both sides, littered with limbs of trees and men, walked by animals and birds of carrion, home to those yet dying who cry for relief from the inhumane suffering which they have just experienced. What terrible scenes, even in books, but surely more so in the face and wake of battle; Job is not one of the wounded; he is the very battlefield on which is being fought the war between God and Satan; he, alone (at least in his own estimation), is between the aforementioned hedges!

In the course of this study three abstract things will be seen between the hedges: first, God's care, evidenced in the placement of the hedges; second, Satan's charge, an attack upon God's placing of the hedges; and, third, Job's complaint, demonstrating his ignorance of the hedges.

God's Care

Between the hedges is seen God's care.

And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east.... Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. (Job 1:2-3; Job 1:9-10)

Two basic and reasonable questions one might ask are these: Were there really hedges around Job? and Had God really placed these hedges around Job? While Satan charged God with making a hedge around Job, one will note that God did not deny having made a hedge around Job; in fact, He gave Satan the restricted power of attacking all that Job had, but not Job himself (Job 1:12). One can infer from the lack of denial and from the allowance of Satan's interference that at least to some degree God had put a hedge around Job. A third question, then, follows: How had God hedged Job in? While the book of Job does not use the term, surely Job as a faithful child of God was recipient of God's special providence!

In the case of Job, there was a large family and great wealth associated with his obedience to God. Regarding his family, Job was married. Wives have always been valued as that given of God (Gen. 2:18) and as the "glory of the man" (1 Cor. 11:7) having the potential to be a fruitful vine (Psa. 128:3). Job also had seven sons—a perfect amount for the mindset of peoples from the Holy Land to beyond Mesopotamia. Job also had three daughters—which number "seems early to have attracted attention as the number in which beginning,

middle, and end are most distinctly marked, and to have been therefore regarded as symbolic of a complete and ordered whole” (Orr). It should also be noted that the seven and three would make a sum of ten children—another number characteristic of completeness. God had provided Job with what might be considered the “perfect” family. That these were the providence of God according to Job’s faithfulness (Job 1:1) may be gathered from Psalm 128:

Blessed *is* every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy *shalt* thou *be*, and *it shall be* well with thee. Thy wife *shall be* as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD. The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children’s children, *and* peace upon Israel.

As for his material wealth, Job “was the greatest of all the men of the east,” having “seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household” which would have included his servants (Job 1:3) and perhaps those to whom Job showed compassion (Job 31:16-20).

At the risk of providing a “spoiler” for those unacquainted with the book, the writer might add that God’s providence—and perhaps His hedge—would again be extended to righteous Job as the book closed, for Job saw his material possessions doubled, his family blessed with seven new sons and three new daughters, and four generations of new youngsters before dying “being old and full of days” (Job 42:12-17).

The special providence of God was upon Job and is yet upon all of God’s faithful children. God abundantly provided for Israel (Deu. 2:7), David (Psa. 23:5), Elijah (1 Kin. 17:6), Jonah (Jon. 4:6);

furthermore, He continues to provide for His saints, as Paul penned, “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phi. 4:19; cf. Mal. 3:10; Luke 6:38). One who experiences and recognizes the care of God for His people could be described as “hedged in” inasmuch as he is surrounded by evidence of a loving, concerned, beneficent God!

Having noted the special providence of God, one might also note and appreciate God’s general providence which is shed upon all men. Above all, one should appreciate that the greatest gift of God is available for all—though men generally refuse the offer, God gave His Son that all men might live eternally (John 3:16). As far as physical blessings, “he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Mat. 5:45; cf Acts 14:17) because “The LORD *is* good to all: and his tender mercies *are* over all his works” (Psa. 145:9).

When considering God’s care, one inevitably learns that God is not like “other” (using the term accommodatively as in Exo. 20:3) gods. Contrast His care and concern and omnipotence in this book with the carelessness and impotence of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kin. 18). The Psalmist described God as “full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth” (Psa. 86:15; cf. Psa. 78:38; Psa. 86:15; Psa. 111:4) and “and righteous” (Psa. 112:4). The latter element demands that the compassion be tempered with justice as ultimately reward is conditioned upon obedience, as Paul wrote to the teetering Romans “Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in *his* goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off” (Rom. 11:22).

Satan’s Charge

Between the hedges is seen Satan’s charge:

Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth
Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made
an hedge about him, and about his house, and

about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath *is* in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD. (Job 1:9-12)

Satan alleged that Job was only obedient to God because God was blessing him and in order that those blessings could continue. This was a great indictment against Job—questioning the sincerity of his adoration of God; however, this was an even greater indictment against God—implying that God could not receive admiration, adoration, and glory from His cherished creature man without having to “pay man off.” Satan asked God, “Doth Job fear God for nought?” (Job 1:9). This was tantamount to asking, “Does Job reverence you for free?”

The true character of Satan is fully revealed in his arrogant affront toward God and his unrelenting and pitiless treatment of the helpless Job! Satan might be able to hide his true character from some—even appearing to be “transformed into an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14)—for he is the wiley deceiver (2 Cor. 11:3) who is the father of lies (John 8:44). In truth and when fully revealed, he is the adversary of God and man (1 Pet. 5:8). He is—though he answers to God (Job 1:6; Job 2:1)—the chief of “the rulers of the darkness of this world” (Eph. 6:12; cf Acts 26:18), “the god of this world [who-DFC] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2 Cor. 4:4). Some have been fooled into idolizing this corrupt devil; one day, however, everyone shall recognize him for who and what he is, “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:” (Eph. 2:2).

One would do well to consider that this tempter (Mat. 4:3; 1 The. 3:5) never changes. If he were allowed to have the power he exhibited in the trying of Job, he would do the very same thing to every child of God, with no remorse. Through history, he has fought God and has sought to corrupt man. He appeared to Adam and Eve for the purpose of attacking God's cherished creation, man (Gen. 3; 2 Cor. 11:3). He had the audacity to appear to the Christ hoping to avert sure defeat (Mat. 4:1-10). He desired to appear before Peter to sift him as wheat (Luke 22:31). Were it in his power, he would appear before every one of God's children today; that is not now in his power, but he still has a powerful influence through the forces of this world such as atheism, humanism, immorality, political correctness, and others. It is no wonder that he has been and is considered "the Adversary" (Job 1:6, ASV)!

Job's Complaint

Between the hedges is seen Job's complaint:

After this opened Job his mouth, and cursed his day. And Job spake, and said, Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived. Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it. Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it; let a cloud dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it. As for that night, let darkness seize upon it; let it not be joined unto the days of the year, let it not come into the number of the months. Lo, let that night be solitary, let no joyful voice come therein... Why died I not from the womb?... Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul; Which long for death, but it cometh not; and dig for it more than for hid treasures; Which rejoice exceedingly, and are

glad, when they can find the grave? Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in? For my sighing cometh before I eat, and my roarings are poured out like the waters. For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me. I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet; yet trouble came. (Job 3:1-7; Job 3:11; Job 3:20-26)

As has already been stated, while Job thought that he was the target, he was, in reality, the battlefield in the war which Satan waged upon God! One would be hard pressed to find in Scripture, yea, in history, any man as pitiable and undeserving of his plight than Job [excepting the sacrificial Jesus]. Men have ended their mortal existences for much less than what Job had faced and was facing; while Job did not resort to that escape, cursing his day [undoubtedly the day of his birth (cf. Job 3:4)] he wished that he had never been born. Consider the expressions of Job who wished that the day were not on the proverbial calendar or that the sun had never come up upon the day of his birth or that he had been stillborn. Why, he wondered, did he have to have been born only to have suffered such a bitter and ignominious blow. Oh how wonderful death would be, but he could not have died—though seemingly every precious thing in his life had either perished or had been taken from him or had turned its back upon him. Job had taken his blessings and safety for granted, while fearing their loss, and suddenly virtually all was gone—“trouble came.” One cannot imagine nor would he want to imagine the impassioned wailing of God’s beloved and prized (Job 1:8) servant Job.

While “his grief was very great” (Job 2:13) and while his “friends” wailed with him (Job 2:11-12), Job effectively asked God, “Why will you not let me die?” This is Job’s intent in speaking of his own state of being “hedged in.” What irony: Satan complained that Job would not leave God because he was hedged in; Job complained that he could

not be relieved of his suffering because he was hedged in. If only Job could have read Job 42 while he was enduring Job 1 and 2! One reading the book of Job surely wishes, “If only I could tell him that it is going to be okay and that it is not your fault and it is not God’s fault—the despicable, diabolical [literally devilish] Satan is doing this to you.” How easy it is for a mortal man to become discouraged when he cannot tell what will happen in any given situation. God, not man, can see “the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done” (Isa. 46:10). God could read Job 42 not only when Job 1 and 2 were taking place, but before they were even written. The defeat of that terrible adversary was the reason that Jesus Christ was “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world”! (Rev. 13:8).

Conclusion

Between the hedges there is a battlefield—Job is that battlefield! Scarred and scoured, enveloped with smoke and gas, riddled with shrapnel, pocked with craters, lined with trenches, carpeted with spent ammunition, charred by fire, puddled with blood lay Job! Between the hedges was God’s care, unseen but always there. Between the hedges was Satan’s charge, an affront for which Satan will eternally pay (Mat. 25:41). Between the hedges was Job’s complaint, uttered in pain and distress and frustration but also in ignorance. Between the hedges was God’s care; between the hedges was God’s care; between the hedges was God’s care!

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CHAPTER 3

Man Giveth Up The Ghost, And Where Is He?

Curtis Cates

One of the most powerful methods of teaching is the questioning method. God used this method powerfully from the first, asking Adam and Eve, “Where art thou?” (American Standard Version, Gen. 3:9). [God never asks for information; He asks to provoke contemplation.] Consider the powerful questions He asked Job (38-41), for example.

In the context of the reality of the problems of life and the ultimate prospects of death, the question under consideration in Job 14:10 was asked by the noble, amazing, upright patriarch Job. In Job 14:1-2 he had observed, “Man, that is born of a woman, Is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: He fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.” With this background, he asks the question: “Yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?” (Job 14:10).

Death is a fact of life common to all mankind; sin brought death about (1 Cor. 15:56; Gen. 2:16-17). “All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). From the beginning, the story of human beings has been “and he died” (Gen. 5:8; Gen. 5:11; Gen. 5:14; Gen. 5:17; Gen. 5:20; Gen. 5:27; Gen. 5:31; Gen. 9:29; et al.). The ratio is the same as it has always been: one death for one life.

As this discussion continues, please make no mistake about these facts. This author rejects completely and absolutely the absurd, God-denying notion that the resurrection is not taught and was not believed in the Old Testament. The adherents of neo-orthodoxy [existentialism] and other critics of Bible truth affirm falsely that

the “fundamentals of the faith” evolved in the mind of man through the generations, including the very existence of God, the Sonship of Jesus Christ, the virgin birth, the vicarious suffering and death, the atoning blood, the bodily resurrection of Christ—and the general resurrection of the dead at the last day. Paul speaks of those who were characterized by being “vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.” These were those perverted souls who came with perverted religion. Why? The reason is that they refused to retain God and His sacred, divine Revelation [the Word] in their knowledge (Rom. 1:18-28).

Further, this writer refuses to allow the modernistic skepticism **about** what the Bible teaches to dictate to him as to what God is saying in His Word. The writer is not a “scholar,” and he has no desire to fit in with or to impress those whom the world generally classifies as scholars. He is certain that many of them will differ with the exegesis of many passages on the subject under discussion. The apostle Paul’s speaking was “not as pleasing men, but God who proveth our hearts” (1 The. 2:4), “Nor seeking glory of men, neither from you nor from others” (1 The. 2:6). So, to you, dear reader, the challenge is: If it is the truth, accept it; if it is error, reject it; that is your responsibility (Acts 17:11). Brother Robert R. Taylor, Jr., in affirming the resurrection of the body upon the Lord’s return, wrote:

Old Testament worthies were not nearly as ignorant of the spirit of man and the resurrection of the body as modernistic skeptics of current times have sought to make them.... A modern infidel like Harry M. Orlinsky (one of the RSV translators) is on public record as saying the immortality of the soul was unknown to Old Testament personalities. (299-300)

What a contrast to the modernists was the writing of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow [a real craftsman, “the only American to be honored by a bust in the Poet’s Corner of Westminster Abbey,” and

a person of great “moral earnestness”] in “Psalm of Life”! Several of the stanzas follow:

Life is real! Life is earnest! And the grave is not
its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest, Was not written
of the soul.

Art is long, and Time is fleeting, And our hearts,
Though stout and brave,
Still, like Muffled drums, are beating Funeral
Marches To the grave.

Trust no Future, howe’er pleasant! Let the dead
Past bury its dead!
Act,—act in the living Present! Heart within, and
God o’erhead!

Lives of great men all remind us We can make
our Lives sublime,
And, departing, leave Behind us Footprints on
the sands of time;

Footprints, that perhaps another, Sailing o’er life’s
Solemn main
A forlorn and shipwrecked Brother, Seeing, shall
take heart again.

Let us, then, be up and doing, With a heart for
Any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing, Learn to labor and
to wait (Hart 357-360).

The burden of this chapter is to answer according to God’s Revelation the question: “Man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?”

The question will be answered in the main from the Old Testament and from Job 14 [and related chapters], from which the question originates. In conclusion, the implications of the question to the lives of mankind today will be noted.

The Resurrection In The Old Testament

David stated that “truly as Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death” (1 Sam. 20:3). However, “Man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?” C. D. Plum wrote, “As surely as man dies he shall live again. The Word of God teaches the resurrection as strongly as it teaches the certainty of death” (851). However, we ask, does the Old Testament give just a *glimmer* of hope—or none at all—as some persons aver? Concerning the “scholars,” Howard Horton wrote:

Scholars have expressed disappointment that so few passages in the Old Testament express unquestionable assurance of the “resurrection of the body.” A few passages will illustrate both the glimmer of hope and the faintness of the affirmation. (230)

Gresham wrote:

It is generally conceived that there is little about resurrection or afterlife in which the Jews called the Torah (the five books of Moses) and the Former Prophets (or historical books of the Old Testament). Death is seen as the end, the destruction of human existence...Many feel that this general concept of death is not invalidated by those isolated accounts of individuals returning to life. (25-26)

Zuck spoke of Job’s thoughts of the “futility of death” and of his

being “utterly extinct, with death considered final and permanent”; from death he would never awake. Yet in a “flash of hope” he longed for the resurrection, “that faint prospect of resurrected life” (65-66). Hesser wrote, “For him [Job] immortality seems to be only a dim possibility that he can long for but can derive no comfort from” (33).

So, the question is, Is the hope of the resurrection at the last day but a *faintness* or a *glimmer*, or is the resurrection totally absent [even in the immediate context of Job 14:10, as well as in the broad context of the whole Old Testament]? This shall be the burden of this study.

Man Made In Image Of God

Speaking in the beginning to His fellow Creators about man’s spiritual nature, God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. (Gen. 1:26-27)

Solomon wrote, “He hath made everything beautiful in its time: also he hath set eternity in their heart!” (Ecc. 3:11). Man’s having been created in the image of God, he shall never cease to exist; mankind is the very offspring of God (Acts 17:28-29); God is the “Father of spirits”—our immortal nature (Heb. 12:9). One might just as well talk about the annihilation of God as to talk about the cessation of a human being’s existence. Once conceived, a human being shall never cease to exist. What a powerful argument for the resurrection the eternal spirit within each of us is!

Faith In The Resurrection

Many Old Testament worthies demonstrated faith in the resurrection. Abraham believed he would be raised from the dead,

for that was the very motivation for leaving Ur “to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance...for he looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:8-10; cf., Gen. 11-12). In addition, this faith was demonstrated when he offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He had told his young men: “Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad [compound subject] will go yonder; and we will worship, and come again to you [compound predicate]” (Gen. 22:5). How did he know both of them would return after he sacrificed Isaac? “Accounting that God is able to raise up, even from the dead” (Heb. 11:17-19). This scribe rejects the idea of Gresham that the “Personal resurrection may have been entertained as a vague hope as early as the days of Abraham” (38). Would you have offered a son as a sacrifice based upon a *vague hope*, dear reader? Abraham saw God’s raising his son Isaac from the dead through the eye of faith; he saw the unseen (Heb. 11:1).

In Hannah’s song of thanksgiving, she prayed thus: “Jehovah killeth, and maketh alive: He bringeth down to Sheol, and bringeth up” (1 Sam. 2:6). This powerful act of God would require the resurrection of the body (cf., 1 Cor. 15:42-44). To attempt to make this symbolic and to refer to Hannah’s having been barren and then having a child is farfetched, for God did not kill the child and then give the child life. It is in the context of glorying in God’s wisdom and power (1 Sam. 2:4-8).

David expected to recognize and to be in the presence of his infant son in their immortal existence. He stated after his son died, “But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me” (2 Sam. 12:23). That we shall exist eternally is eminently true—and, the “idea” did not evolve in the mind of man!

Ezekiel truly believed in the bodily resurrection. In the valley of dry bones when God asked the prophet, “Son of man, can these bones live?” (Eze. 37:3), the necessary implication is that Ezekiel and the nation were familiar with the fact of the bodily resurrection at the last day. Otherwise, the vision would have been completely without understanding when the bones were reattached, when the

sinews, flesh, and skin covered them, when breath reentered them, and when they lived and stood upon their feet (Eze. 37:1-14). When Ezekiel responded with “O Lord Jehovah, thou knowest,” he clearly recognized God’s power to raise from the dead. Of course, we recognize that God is illustrating, with the bodily resurrection, the restoration of His people as a nation after the captivity in Babylon. Nevertheless, their understanding of the vision depended upon their faith in the resurrection.

Enoch And Elijah Translated

The power of God is clearly evident in the translation of two of His greatest servants—one of them hundreds of years before the time of Job! “All the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: and Enoch walked with God; and he was not; for God took him” (Gen. 5:23-24). Not only can God raise the dead, but He is able to keep death’s powers from even touching those whom He would call to Himself. No, it is not stated concerning Enoch, “and he died”! Paul stated, “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death” (Heb. 11:5).

Elijah was translated as was Enoch: “There appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire [likely angels (Psa. 104:4)], which parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven,” as the sons of the prophets had earlier told Elisha would happen (2 Kin. 2:5; 2 Kin. 2:11). Both of these translations were historical reality—not myths, symbolism, nor imagination. The Jews themselves thought that Elijah was coming back during Jesus’ day (Mat. 17:10; John 1:21), indicating they certainly did not believe they were annihilated! God will receive all believers who are alive when Jesus reappears at the last day (1 Cor. 15:51-57; 1 The. 4:15-17). God, who could translate Enoch and Elijah, can certainly raise the dead at last. Man is immortal, the necessary implication being that the writers of Genesis and 2 Kings held the truth of eternal existence—and their same personalities would persist!

Still Alive Though In Sheol

In Exodus 3:6, God told Moses, “I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Of course,

Abraham had died and “was gathered unto his people” (Gen. 25:8). Jacob had died and “was gathered unto his people” (Gen. 49:33); however, it was some time before his embalmed body was buried in Palestine with his people (Gen. 50:4-14). The same was true of Joseph, who died likewise in Egypt (Gen. 50:25-26). But, how many years was it before his bones were likewise buried with his ancestors in the Cave of Machpelah (Jos. 24:32)? Their souls had been gathered to their righteous ancestors.

Death was/is not extinction, as the Sadducees [and some religionists today] held it to be. Christ stated, “But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (Mat. 22:31-32). These patriarchs were very much alive in Sheol. Christ clearly affirmed the resurrection in this context thus: “But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the place concerning the Bush, when he calleth the Lord, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Now he is not the God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him” (Luke 20:37-38). Dear reader, does that sound like a “vague glimmer,” a “dim hope,” the end of one’s existence, an “unsubstantiated wish”?

While Rachel was giving birth to Benjamin, “her soul was departing” (Gen. 35:18), which fact proves that the spirit is distinct from the body; her immortal nature went to Sheol, the place of departed spirits awaiting the resurrection, the realm of the unseen. Jacob believed that his son Joseph had gone to Sheol, though he thought that wild beasts had devoured his physical body: “He refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down to Sheol to my son mourning” (Gen. 37:35).

When Saul went to the “woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor” and said to her, “Bring me up Samuel,” this *medium* was greatly shocked when Samuel appeared. “And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice; and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul. And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what seest thou? And the woman

said unto Saul, I see a god coming up out of the earth” (1 Sam. 28:8-14). Samuel asked Saul why he “disquieted me, to bring me up?” (1 Sam. 28:15). Saul knew that Samuel was yet alive and fully conscious; how otherwise could this historical event have taken place? Samuel was disturbed at having been called by Saul from Sheol, again to be involved in things pertaining to the earth.

Some Raised Bodily In Old Testament Times

The Old Testament records no less than three persons who were literally, actually raised from the dead. Elijah prayed to God concerning the dead son of the widow of Zarephath: “O Jehovah my God, I pray thee, let this child’s soul come into him again. And Jehovah hearkened unto the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived” (1 Kin. 17:21-22), proving to the mother that Elijah was “a man of God, and that the word of Jehovah in thy mouth is truth” (1 Kin. 17:24). There was no question about the boy’s death; the mother accused Elijah of being there for the purpose of and having slain her son (1 Kin. 17:18). Additionally, the spirit entered back again into the body of the boy, and he revived.

Again, the child of the Shunammite woman

was dead, and laid upon his bed. He [Elisha] went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto Jehovah. And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon him; and the flesh of the child waxed warm. Then he returned, and walked in the house once to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. (2 Kin. 4:32-37)

Then again, the Bible records that a corpse was cast “into the sepulcher of Elisha: and as soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet” (2 Kin. 13:21). Of course,

these who were raised from the dead would die again, as would those raised upon the event of Christ's crucifixion, Lazarus, Dorcas, et al. However, those raised at the last day [all the dead] shall never die again, just as Christ was raised never to die again.

Prophecies Of Christ's Bodily Resurrection

Many of the prophecies in the Old Testament predicted Christ's resurrection from the dead. Psalm 16:10 states, "For thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol; Neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption." Peter by inspiration said in Acts 2:23-28 that this prophecy was of Christ's being raised from the dead—see also Acts 13:28-39.

Christ, God's suffering Servant, was "cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due. And they made his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death" (Isa. 53:8-9), but "he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand" (Isa. 53:10). The exaltation of Christ would **require** the bodily resurrection. Hosea spoke of Christ thus: "Come, and let us return unto Jehovah; for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: on the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live before him" (Hos. 6:1-2). This is a figure of the resurrection of Christ on the third day (Luke 24:44-46) and of Christ's being "the firstfruits of them that are asleep" (1 Cor. 15:20), which first fruits symbolize the general harvest at the Lord's second appearing (Heb. 9:28). Of course, the very first prophecy in the Bible, Genesis 3:15, requires the resurrection of Christ—the bruising of the head of Satan (cf., Rom. 1:4).

The General Resurrection At The Last Day

The Old Testament gives numerous references and prophecies of the resurrection from the dead. In the Psalms is David's prayer: "As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with beholding thy form" (Psa. 17:15). Note the contrast with the wicked, "whose portion is in this life" (Psa. 17:14). Compare this with Psalm 73:24: "Thou wilt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." The psalmist would receive honor

and glorious blessings after this life is over, in heaven, necessitating the resurrection. Even death would not end his relationship with God but would rather intensify it. On the other hand, the wicked seem to prosper here, but death and the resurrection of both the good and the evil reverse the situations (Luke 16:19-31). Note also Psalm 49:15: "But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol; For he will receive me." God would rescue his soul [and our souls] from Sheol. How? Does this not argue for life after death and for the resurrection?

Further, Isaiah prophecies of the resurrection. "He hath swallowed up death for ever; and the Lord Jehovah will wipe away tears from off all faces" (Isa. 25:8). This is the Hebrew perfect tense, "Jehovah will." Schlep said, "His future eschatological actions are the subject of the whole passage.... 'He will swallow up death for ever...'" (51). "Because this passage speaks so clearly to resurrection, some critics have suggested that it is an interpolation added at a later time when the doctrine of resurrection had become more dominant in Jewish thought" (Gresham 31). But, note the evident connection of Isaiah's prophecy to Paul's statement: "Death is swallowed up in victory (1 Cor. 15:54). Again, "Thy dead shall live; my dead bodies shall arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast forth the dead" (Isa. 26:19). It could as well be translated "my dead body"; however, it may be speaking collectively of the dead. Dew, "the symbol of life-giving power," would be speaking to raising those corpses that are in the dust (Schep 55). Israel was mourning over their righteous dead; this action and Isaiah 25:8 provided great comfort. Notice that the identity of the body would remain the same—"my dead body(ies)." The spirit that returns to God at death (Ecc. 12:7) shall be reunited with its own body at death (cf., 1 Cor. 15:42-44).

Even further, Daniel prophesied of the general resurrection: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and

ever (Dan. 12:2-3). The “many” that shall awake can mean all (Rom. 5:15-19). It suggests the great multitude of all the dead. This is the ultimate reward awaiting the righteous and faithful Jews during the period of the Maccabeans—and all the righteous of all the ages. As relates to the punishment of the wicked, compare Matthew 10:28, Luke 16:19-31, Matthew 25:41-46, Revelation 21:8, et al.

The Judgment At The Last Day

The Old Testament clearly warns man of the coming and final judgment. Job himself warned his three *friends*, “Be ye afraid of the sword: for wrath bringeth the punishments of the sword, That ye may know there is a judgment” (Job 19:29). Was that *stern warning* by Job to his supposed friends [who ruthlessly and falsely accused Job and spoke wrongfully about God] based upon some vague, dim glimmer of a mere supposition that there might just possibly be a resurrection? Job knew that there would be a time after his death when he [and they] would “come before him [God]” (Job 13:16). Because of his Mediator [Christ], he would stand before God face to face, but “not as a stranger” (Job 19:26-27).

He was very much aware that God is going to rise up against the wicked in judgment (Ecc. 11:9). Appearing at the throne of God at the judgment requires the resurrection of the body. Note the Scriptures which speak of the “last day,” including the resurrection and the judgment (John 11:24; John 6:44; John 12:48; John 5:28-29; 1 Cor. 15:50-52; 2 Tim. 4:6-8; Phi. 3:20-21; et al.). “There shall be a resurrection both of the just and unjust” (Acts 24:15). Job **knew** that!

“Man Giveth Up The Ghost, And Where Is He?”

With this tremendous background of evidence from the Old Testament Scriptures, let us now concentrate upon the question Job asked. There is no doubt **at all** in this writer’s mind that the patriarch Job realized that he had an immortal nature—that he would never cease to exist. Where is even a shade of an idea that Job’s righteous children did not live on, that they were annihilated like his animals that died? [When God doubled all Job had, notice that he **did not** give Job twenty more children—for he still had his first ten children, who

were already with the Lord.] Had he not believed in the immortality of the soul, why would he ask: “Why did I not give up the ghost when my mother bare me?” (Job 3:11). He knew that his spirit was placed by God into his body at the point of conception and that it was not his breath or his biological nature. He also knew that his spirit would eventually go into the place of departed spirits—Sheol (Job 7:9)—from which he would not return to this earthly existence (Job 7:10).

He further knew that he would come before God in judgment after he was killed [he thinks by God, actually by Satan], and he was determined that, when he stands before God, “That a godless man shall not come before him” (Job 13:16). In fact, he reaches out to a Redeemer who would plead his case before God (Job 13:18-19). Because of these and other reasons, this author **absolutely rejects** the idea suggested by many commentators that Job has despaired of a resurrection; man is no better off than a dead tree, they say (Job 14:7-12). If the hope of man is expressed in the statement “So man lieth down and riseth not” (Job 14:12), then he is of all men most miserable!

Job Pleads For Respite From Trouble

Job pleaded for relief from his grievous sufferings, praying that God would “Look away from him, that he may rest, Till he shall accomplish, as a hireling [hired man], his day” (Job 14:6). Not knowing that the honor and character of both God and Job were earlier challenged by Satan, that the battle was between God and Satan, that Job was in the middle, and that Satan—not God—was destroying Job, Job mistakenly feels that God is constantly eyeing him and persecuting him. [The truth is that God was the greatest sufferer in Job (Jam. 5:11).] Thus, Job is desperate for some comfort. Nonetheless, no matter what happened, Job would never turn his back on God—“I have not denied the words of the Holy One” (Job 6:10); “a godless man shall not come before him [in judgment]...I know I am righteous,” Job stated (Job 13:15-18)!

“Hope Of A Tree”

Job realized that cut-down trees—their stumps—may sprout again; though seemingly dead, “through the scent of water it will

bud, And put forth boughs like a plant” (Job 14:7-9). Dear reader, you likely have seen this phenomenon with some trees in the woods. Isaiah used this very illustration concerning the Messiah, who would “come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit” (Isa. 11:1; cf., Jer. 22:24-30). What about man when he dies; what is his **future**? OR, does he even have a future? Some say no; what says Job?

Giving Up The Ghost

“But man dieth, and is laid low: Yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?” (Job 14:10). Unlike the tree which **appears** to be dead [which can maintain life in its stump and roots, put forth new growth, and thus return to its place] and “comes back to life here on earth,” when a person dies [death is a separation of the soul from the body; “the body apart from the spirit is dead” (Jam. 2:26)], life is gone. As long as a person’s immortal nature is separate from his or her body, there is no regeneration of life [as with the tree]. Job was keenly aware of that! So, “where is he” when he gives up the ghost?

In Job’s soliloquy in chapter 3, he fervently wished he had never been born, affirming the following truth in question form: “Why died I not from the womb? Why did I not give up the ghost when my mother bare me?” (Job 3:11). He knew that his ghost, or immortal nature, was distinct from his body. He knew, as did Solomon, that His ghost would return to God who gave it (Ecc. 12:7). But that would come later, for his mother did not have a miscarriage and his father’s knees had received him as his own child. Thus, he was experiencing indescribable pain, suffering, and sorrow. [Please note also that he was **Job**—*in the womb*; he had **his spirit**—*in the womb*; God formed **him**—*in the womb* (Job 10:8-13); he was **a human being**—*in the womb*; therefore, the necessary implication is that **abortion is murder**!] When righteous Job would die, the angels would carry his immortal spirit into Sheol, the intermediate state, Paradise, to await the resurrection of the dead (cf., Luke 16:22).

Job continued, “As the waters fail from the sea, And the river wasteth and drieth up; So man lieth down and riseth not: Till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, Nor be roused out of their

sleep” (Job 14:11-12). At times, Job would speak of the drying up of oases and of streams dried up or gone underground (Job 6:15-20); they would no longer be seen. When righteous people die, they are separated from the sight of man; however, they are not annihilated. Job realized keenly that “sleep” is a gentle figure for death—it is not extinction, it is only temporary, it is not unconsciousness, and one will be awakened with renewed strength at the resurrection. The dead are completely conscious in Sheol [Hades], in the protection and comfort of the Father. Job knew that, thus the reason he wished he had never been born or wished he could die, to escape his misery (Job 3:20-22).

“Till The Heavens Be No More”

Does this statement mean that because mankind considered the heavens to be permanent [as some scholars aver], that man’s demise was permanent—thus, no hope? Did God consider the heavens and earth to be eternal? Note the following in Genesis 8:22: **“While the earth remaineth**, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.” The necessary implication is that the heavens and the earth were not and are not permanent (cf., 2 Pet. 3). They are “by the same word... stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men” (2 Pet. 3:7).

“Hide Me...Keep Me Secret”

Inasmuch as Satan had hidden his ugly claw, inasmuch as “the fire of God...burned up the sheep” and the whirlwind killed Job’s children, et al., and inasmuch as God was no longer answering his prayers and was not speaking to him as He had before, Job had concluded in error that God was angry with him [God’s hands were tied]. In Sheol, Job stated, he would be kept concealed and secure from God’s wrath; whatever the cause of God’s “anger,” that would give Him time to “get over it,” Job thought.

The Call Of God

Job goes on to affirm that he will have a *release* from death—he **shall live again** (Job 14:14)! “Thou [God] wouldest call, and I would answer thee: Thou wouldest have a desire to the work of thy hands”

(Job 14:15). God would get over His “wrath”; He “wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me!” (Job 14:13). He would then raise Job out of Sheol. God would want again to see Job; indeed, God had made him what he was—spiritually, as well as physically. Unlike the wicked, Job expected to be “**gathered to his fathers**” (Job 27:19). Compare this statement to that about the patriarchs. Yes indeed, because of the God-man [Job’s Kinsman and Redeemer (Job 16:18-21)], he would see his dear heavenly Father in judgment, *for himself*, “And mine eyes shall behold, and not as a stranger” (Job 19:26-27).

Conclusion

The thesis of this chapter has been the study of the general resurrection at the last day, especially as seen in the Old Testament. It was not a fleeting idea or a vague wish. The evidence from the Old Testament is powerful, and it is fully corroborated in the New Testament [which must be left to a separate study]. May our faith be strengthened in the sacred revelation of God, which began in the Garden of Eden and continued until the perfect law of liberty was completed and written in the Holy Book Divine!

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CHAPTER 4

I Know That My Redeemer Liveth: Keeping The Faith In An Age Of Doubt

Rick Brumback

What challenging friends they were. In his pain and loss, Job's close friends proffered only words of accusation. Surely he had sinned egregiously, they averred, to have received such punishment from God. In truth, they erred egregiously, misunderstanding the often knotty relationship between temporal suffering and personal sin. They dismissed Job's protests of innocence, instead imploring him to admit his evils. The patriarch was being vilified unfairly.

From the depths of emotional, intellectual, and even spiritual distress, Job's desperate response to these abuses was to proclaim baldly his confidence in a living Redeemer who would one day, at the last day, stand upon the earth judging him and all people (Job 19:25)—“For I, even I, know my Redeemer lives and will stand in the end over the land of the perishing. And after they strike down my flesh from the realm of the living, I will see God.”¹ Job's proclamation of confidence encompasses several significant thoughts. First, his statement forcefully declared the personal conviction of this future event; he knew this end as a certainty. He also knew that, in the face of these unjust accusations, he had a Redeemer who would stand in his behalf and vindicate the patriarch's righteous life. And he knew that this would take place at a future time when he had long passed from life, and that in this judgment the Redeemer would stand over all mortals.

How could this man, whose personal life had only recently experienced such upheaval, proclaim unswervingly this confidence in God and divine justice? This was not simply a conclusion he grasped *ex nihilo* during his distress. Quite the contrary. This conviction was the by-product of his life. When we are first introduced to Job, he is described as “upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil” (King James Version, Job 1:1). He possessed tremendous wealth measured in the currency of his day—livestock and servants. His family was large and enjoyed close relations. To Job’s credit, his material prosperity did not cause him to forget the Creator (see the concerns of Pro. 30:7-9). Instead, he remained cognizant of the Lord’s nature and expectations for human conduct; he conscientiously offered sacrifices on behalf of his family in case they had committed sins. God noted with satisfaction Job’s piety, and when Satan came before Yahweh, the Lord commented upon the upright character of Job (Job 1:8). Even when he did suffer the devastating losses of family and possessions, when his own health had failed, Job refused to repudiate his relationship with God.

How could he avow his confidence in the Redeemer? It was the consequence of knowing God, of having a relationship with God, and of serving God. Such convictions are the by-product of these other factors—factors which deserve exploration for pertinence to life today. The aim of this essay is to examine the reasons for confidence such as that of Job 19:25. Can the modern, educated, and thoughtful woman or man truly believe in God and Christ, and in a judgment day before the Redeemer?

Militating Against This Confidence

The 21st century is a time of skepticism toward things spiritual, especially matters associated with organized religion. With the rise of the Enlightenment project in the 18th century, it was believed that humanity had risen beyond the pre-modern limits of knowledge and self-analysis. Instead, religion was relegated to the status of superstition among the educated and the cultural leaders. Even for

those spiritually inclined, religion was placed into a category beyond concrete knowledge and affirmation. Unlike the investigations of science, with their dependence upon empirical methods, religion remained a vast Other, not subject to scrutiny or investigation beyond a comparison of historical trends and manifestations.

The seeds of this had already been sown in preceding years by those who wondered if religion was something created and simply passed along without critical examination. Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), French mathematician and philosopher, famously proposed his so-called “wager,” in which he assessed the possible outcomes of belief in God should it turn out that He does or does not exist (hint: He does). Now Christianity was represented as a gamble or hope rather than a valid and authenticated religion.

Humanity has reaped the whirlwind of this development. Universities are filled with figures who hurl criticisms against religion, and in America it seems that no religion is as despised as Christianity. Consequently, those attending institutions of higher learning are being subjected routinely to doubts or peremptory dismissal. Consider the recent quote from Harvard professor Steven Pinker: “Faith is believing in something without good reasons to do so. It has no place in anything but a religious institution, and our society has no shortage of these” (Miller). These sentiments affect not only the university, but they reach where those who resound such messages travel: the classroom, industry, media, politics, the home. The advanced degrees possessed by those who routinely pronounce such conclusions offer a patina of respectability which augments the force of their words, if not their arguments. In short, one may ask how such educated people can be wrong in these conclusions. But let us not forget that such figures work within the frame of their own assumptions and attitudes. And they have their own agendas.

Sadly, the force of such skepticism has been felt even among those who do profess a Christian faith. Seminarians are routinely told that the Gospel accounts are likely not true, or they contain numerous errors. Religion professors announce that the creation account is mythical and that they are not certain if many of the heroes of the

faith actually existed or were legendary figures.² Graduates nurtured under such tutelage subsequently fill pulpits and hand along this uncertainty to church members ill-prepared to think critically about these claims and the consequences of these beliefs.

The fallout from this theological trajectory has been varied. Clearly some have moved to agnosticism or unmitigated—even militant—atheism. Among many churches the response has been to limit faith to the subjective side of human experience outside the range of rational enquiry. In other words, people regard “faith” as something to be experienced personally rather than explained and examined; it is often thought “better felt than told.” Pastors announce that reason cannot be used with the Bible, either through the mistaken notion that the Scriptures would not be fitting material for investigation, or perhaps because such investigation might unearth something other than treasured doctrine.³

It is no wonder that mainline Protestantism, and many progressive congregations of the Lord’s people as well, are in decline numerically.⁴ What staying power can be attached to a religious system which offers no reliable message and no objective, historical reality at its core?

A Fresh Look at Reasons for Confidence

Have we heard the final word concerning the confidence we can have in God, Christ, the Bible, and all things associated with Christianity? Yes and no. No, if we mean that the voices of doubt in our time speak authoritatively and informedly. In fact, there is much that can be said to those who ask good, legitimate questions in search of understanding *and* to those who aim to deconstruct Christianity and religious belief. Yes, if we mean that God has spoken, giving clear and concrete reasons to believe the Gospel message. The Scriptures are credible, their message believable, and a commitment to Christ justifiable. Our aim is to rebuff this skepticism of a contemporary culture which has strayed into the thicket and to demonstrate that the Word is a reliable guide to know and follow the Lord, Job’s Redeemer.

We start with the premise that God desires that we be certain about a number of facts relating to Christ and Christianity. For example, He desires we be certain that Jesus was a figure in history Who was sent to save the world. Any decision as significant as choosing to be a disciple must be approached with confidence that it is the right move. God knows this, which is why He is interested in helping people, helping us, to be absolutely firm in our belief in Christ as His Son, and in the need to follow Him.

God has given a witness, a record of His Son. This is a witness to Christ's existence, the fact that He was here, drew breath, lived. Any person investigating the Christ must come to terms with the fact that He was an historical figure as real as Julius Caesar or Franklin Roosevelt. Consider the voices hostile to Christianity which nevertheless confirm Jesus' existence. The Roman historian Suetonius, writing in the early second century, wrote of Christians and their origins with a figure called the Chrestus [Christ] (*Claudius* 25.4). His contemporary Tacitus mentioned Christ, crucified under Pontius Pilate (*Annals* 15.44). And Pliny (the Younger), governor of Bithynia, in about A.D. 112 wrote to Emperor Trajan asking how to handle matters involving Christians in his district. In the letter he mentions Christ, worshipped by the Christians as a God (*Epistle* 96; the imperial response from Trajan is at *Epistles* 10.97). None of these early sources are sympathetic to the Christians or Christianity, but they all spoke of this as a religion centered upon the historical figure of Jesus Christ. To this list we could add the references from the sub-apostolic period (just after the apostles) which speak of Christ and the origins of Christianity. Even Islam, itself opposed to New Testament Christianity and denying the deity of Jesus, considers Him a prophet and historical figure.

What of the early figures like John, Luke, Mark, and Matthew? What about Paul, Peter, and John? Why should they be disallowed? Peter walked at Jesus' side across Palestine, and then he served as an apostle throughout the balance of his life. He could recall later in his career,

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. (2 Pet. 1:16-18)

Cephas' colleague John, son of Zebedee, wrote to demonstrate that Jesus was a real figure with Whom the apostles and others interacted:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. (1 John 1:1-3)

If we note the verbs of sense perception, we can appreciate how John wished to inform his readers of the reality of Jesus' existence; he does not hesitate to label as "anti-Christ" those who denied the reality of Jesus' fleshly existence (1 John 4:3; 2 John 7). As a final example of such language rooting Christ into the fabric of history, consider Paul's words to Herod Agrippa II and the procurator Festus:

Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great,

saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles. And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. (Act 26:22-26)

It would require greater blindness to reject a belief in Jesus' existence than to admit that He did, in fact, live when and where the Bible and other records indicate.

However, even if we demonstrate that Jesus was an historical figure, one may ask whether it is appropriate to believe in Jesus as the Messiah—the anticipated religious leader from the Jewish religion, and as the Son of God. In other words, are the Biblical claims about this historical figure accurate? This is a compelling question. Let us state at the outset an unequivocal “yes”—the theological claims about Jesus' identity as Savior and Son of God are just as reliable as the proof for His existence. We simply must marshal the necessary pieces of evidence to see their impact.

Since this turns on the reliability of the Scriptures' testimony, we ask how reliable and accurate the Bible is in its facts and documentation. And since the Bible records events of ancient history, as well as features of the created order, we should expect harmony with the general pool of human knowledge. Biblical claims should agree with known history, science, archaeology, and similar disciplines: this would help establish the Word's accuracy and integrity. We would also want to know that the Bible text has been

transmitted carefully so that modern readers have the same reliable message as early Christians. If the Scriptures are credible in these areas, then we are positioned to accept the spiritual claims the Word makes: “Although confirmation of one kind of truth (historical) does not demonstrate the validity of another kind of truth (theological), the veracity of the historical narrative of Scripture lends credence to the theological message” (Free 13). Though detailed examination of these areas would require an extensive study, we can at least provide summary assessments of studies done previously.

How does the Bible’s information harmonize with established facts in various disciplines? Consider the assessment of archaeological corroboration. Where critics have claimed the record is inaccurate or unreliable, further study and discoveries have overturned the points of criticism: “Yet archaeological discoveries have shown that these critical charges and countless others are wrong and that the Bible is trustworthy in the very statements that critics have set aside as untrustworthy” (Free and Vos 14). Or, as Kyle Butt has noted, “[The] Bible and archaeological facts fit together like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle.... Yes, the archaeological evidence confirms the Bible on countless occasions, providing even more evidence to document that it is the inspired Word of God” (44-45).

Similar conclusions have resulted from historical investigations. For example, William Ramsey, archaeologist and historian, had initially considered Luke’s histories of the Gospel according to Luke and the Acts of the Apostles to have been filled with errors and inaccuracies. In an effort to prove these flaws, he undertook an extensive examination of Luke’s records in light of modern historical and archaeological records. To his surprise, his conclusions differed immensely from the anticipated outcome. He concluded, “Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy...[he] should be placed along with the very greatest of historians” (222). Wrote the professor of classics E.M. Blaiklok, “For accuracy of detail, and for evocation of atmosphere, Luke stands, in fact, with Thucydides. The Acts of the Apostles is not a shoddy product of pious imagining, but a trustworthy record” (96).

In light of these various factors, we agree with Free and Vos: “As has been said, ‘The Scriptures were written not primarily to tell us how the heavens go, but to tell us how to go to heaven.’ Yet the content of all Scripture is scientifically and historically accurate, and the scientific and historical allusions of the Bible are constantly illuminated and confirmed by modern discoveries” (14).

Even if the Biblical record is reliable in its data, we may enquire about the means by which it has been transmitted throughout the centuries: what certainty do we have that what was said and written originally is represented by what we possess in the Bible today? Realize first that this question is somewhat answered by the previous section, viz., the historical and archaeological examinations have been made using the text of the Bible available in modern times, and these examinations have shown a high level of agreement with recognized facts in the various disciplines. In other words, the Bible you and I hold has already shown itself reliable in transmission because the fact-checking that has taken place has been done with the modern Bible. However, enquiry still must be made into the reliability of transmission for both Old and New Testaments.

Regarding the Old Testament, it is demonstrable that not only writing but Hebrew writing antedated Moses. Therefore, from an early date the Scriptures were written and copied. We do not possess any sizable portion of the Hebrew Scriptures older than the Cairo Codex (A.D. 895), the Leningrad Codex of the Prophets (A.D. 916), and the Aleppo Codex dated from the first half of the tenth century. The oldest extant copy of the entire Hebrew Bible is the Leningrad Codex, completed in A.D. 1008 (Geisler and Nix 358-359). So we may wonder if these copies faithfully represent the Scriptures that the Jews knew and possessed. In March 1947, a shepherd boy stumbled upon a series of caves near the Dead Sea in which he found several leather scrolls. Later exploration uncovered thousands of manuscript fragments which are thought to have once constituted a religious library of a Jewish sect known as the Essenes. These Dead Sea Scrolls included a complete copy of the book of Isaiah and fragments which together represent every Old Testament book except Esther.

These manuscripts are dated from the third century B.C. to the first century A.D., and their discovery allowed an unprecedented opportunity to compare modern Hebrew manuscripts against vastly older copies (Geisler and Nix 366-367). How do these copies, at least one thousand years older than the extant texts mentioned above, compare and attest to the integrity of the modern Bible? Gleason Archer, after examining a fragment of the book of Isaiah found in addition to the complete text of the book mentioned above, stated that it “proved to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95 percent of the text. The five percent of variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling” (qtd. in Free and Vos 176). “First...the discovery of the scrolls pushed back the history of our Hebrew manuscript collection by a thousand years. Second...during the long period of copying the Old Testament text by hand, there was a remarkable—can we say miraculous—degree of preservation of the text. What could be said for the Isaiah manuscripts was approximately true of the rest of the scrolls as well” (Free and Vos 178). According to Geisler and Nix, it may now, more than ever before the Dead Sea Scroll discoveries, be stated that the Hebrew text of our Old Testament faithfully reproduces the Hebrew text as originally written by the Old Testament authors (367). We can reliably say that we possess the same Old Testament Scriptures that were used in Jesus’ day. Because of this fact, my certainty when turning to the Hebrew Scriptures is well-placed and greatly reassuring.

Can the same be said about the New Testament? Although the originals are not available, there are three broad categories of witnesses to the Greek text: *Greek manuscripts*, *ancient translations*, and *patristic citations*. The Greek manuscripts may be divided into *papyri* (manuscripts written on papyrus sheets), *uncials* (manuscripts written on vellum or parchment in capital letters), *miniscules* (manuscripts also written on vellum or parchment, but in small letters) and *lectionaries* (church service books containing selected readings from the New Testament) (Geisler and Nix 386, 416).

In addition to the Greek manuscripts, the ancient translations and patristic citations give additional insight into the original Greek texts. Early on, the Greek New Testament was translated into other ancient languages as Christianity spread; numerous copies of such translations are extant, allowing for a comparison with the modern Greek text of the Bible. The patristic sources are the Bible references in the literature written by church leaders in the first centuries of Christianity. Often these writers would quote or reference the Greek New Testament in their writings, giving another indirect source for examining the early Greek texts. While the Greek manuscripts (papyri, uncials, miniscules and lectionaries) are the most important, the ancient translations and patristic sources are also valuable.

There are an enormous number of Greek manuscripts that have been preserved which form a tremendous witness to the Greek text of the Bible. The total number of extant New Testament manuscripts, drawn from all four categories listed above, is 5,300+. To this number may be added over 36,000 patristic citations and numerous ancient versions. What is astounding is that, given the abundance of these witnesses to the Greek text, they exhibit a very high level of agreement. Although there are variations in the Greek texts represented by these thousands of manuscripts and citations, A.T. Robertson has suggested that any real concern for these variants affects only one one-thousandth of the entire New Testament. This would mean that the text of the New Testament is 99.9% free from real concern for errors in the text. B. B. Warfield noted that the great mass of the New Testament has been transmitted with virtually no variations (Geisler and Nix 474). The overwhelming conclusion is that the New Testament text used today accurately represents the originals.

Given the information above, it is evident that we may rest assured that, so long as we have a faithful translation, the Bible we possess is the Word of God and is true to the message given by the spokesmen of God so long ago. We need never doubt the integrity of the Scriptures, but rely upon them as God's revelation given to guide humanity forward into eternity. This truth is not known or

admitted by critics of Christianity, but it deserves acknowledgement and should buttress our faith in the Bible and in the Bible's message.

If we confirm the details of the Biblical record, we must take seriously the theological claims of the Word. Jesus did not equivocate when acknowledging His divinity (John 9:36-39). He also affirmed that spiritual and eternal life can only be achieved by following Him (John 8:30-31; John 14:6). Therefore, Christianity cannot be a hobby, not a temporary avenue to travel today before turning off tomorrow. Christianity is a relationship grounded in God's identity and our response to His teachings; it is meant to be an eternal relationship. It is our link to Jesus Christ and to God above, made possible by the Lord's overtures to us. But there need be no confusion about Who God is, or the role His Son is to play in our lives. Jehovah is. Humanity did not create Him; He created us. Therefore, despite any denials, He exists as does His Son. We succeed when we acknowledge Him and His grand plan. This is what John meant in 1 John 5:11. God is the only God, and the Son our only Savior.

Our contemporaries are cosmopolitan, pluralistic. At best they would relegate Christ to a seat at the table among all other religious leaders, a number that increases over time, by the way. But the Biblical perspective, that of God and those who served Him so intimately, the early Christians and apostles, is far different. John was there with Peter in Acts 4:12 and affirming along with him, "There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Paul would boldly proclaim, "Every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phi. 2:11).

First John 5:13 is concerned with one word: peace. It is the peace that comes from having a healthy relationship with God above. It is the peace that comes from knowing, beyond doubt, that our course is set for heaven. And it is the peace that comes from having a spirit of belonging among the greatest body of all time—the church of Jesus Christ.

In the midst of cynical skepticism, or aimless wondering, God desires that we find that anchor, Jesus the Christ, and fix ourselves firmly with cables that never give way. "For the which cause I also

suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day” (2 Tim. 1:12). In fact, the Lord is so concerned with our confidence in Him that He had John say at the end of that Gospel account a similar message—“These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life in His name.”

Conclusion

How does this relate to Job and his expression regarding the Redeemer? Simple. He was not mistaken in recognizing that God exists, that there would be a judge, the Redeemer, on the final day, Who would stand over all humanity and render a verdict on each person. Job was confident; hence his use of the word *Redeemer*, that with God he would be vindicated and saved. He may not have known Jesus’ name or face precisely (see 1 Pet. 1:10-12), but the patriarch had absolute confidence in the God he served. You and I can have the same confidence and the same faithfulness today. The Lord once stated, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself” (John 7:17). Jesus did come to offer Himself for humanity as a sacrifice for our sins, freeing us from Satan and evil, and to allow us spiritual life with God for eternity. Though Paul was called “mad” for his proclamation of this message, he remained unrepentant in his belief (Acts 26:25-26). The proof is here, and the opportunity to be a disciple stands before each person. In the end, when the world is judged by Christ (Acts 17:30-31), we can be confident of our position before Jehovah if we are faithful disciples. And we should be. We should be able to say confidently, “I know that my Redeemer lives,” and then live for him.

Notes

1. Author’s translation.
2. In an unfortunate personal anecdote, my seminary professor of Old Testament was asked by one of my fellow students whether

Elijah and Elisha were really historical figures. He replied that it did not matter because the church had decided that these stories would be authoritative and that was enough to make them normative.

3. Building upon the work of Francis Schaeffer, Nancy R. Pearcey had helpfully pointed to the issues at the heart of the reason/faith divide and its inherent inaccuracy (*Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* [Wheaton: Crossway, 2005]). However, Ms. Pearcey works from an Evangelical perspective and represents those theologies, so this text must be used with discernment.

4. A penetrating and well-documented description of these theological trends and the affect upon Protestantism is presented by Kenneth Reeves, *The Empty Church: The Suicide of Liberal Christianity* (New York: Free Press, 1996).

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CHAPTER 5

What Is Man That Thou Shouldest Magnify Him? And That Thou Shouldest Set Thine Heart Upon Him?

Greg Dismuke

Have you ever had a police cruiser follow you through town? Have you ever felt as if the police officer was just looking for an opportunity to pull you over and to give you a ticket? Have you ever been in a class and felt as if the teacher was singling you out to make an example out of you? Although these thoughts may or may not have been accurate, most of us have had them at one time or another.

In the seventh chapter of the book that bears his name, Job had these thoughts. However, he did not have these thoughts about a police officer or about a teacher. He had these about God. He felt as if God was watching his every move to catch him in something. He felt as if God was singling him out. In the midst of his suffering, Job asked, “What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him? And that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?” (King James Version, Job 7:17-18). Job felt as if he was constantly on trial. He felt as if God was visiting him every morning and trying him every moment. He felt as if every action in his life was being magnified and scrutinized. He did not know why he warranted such attention from the Almighty. He was a man, not a monster (Job 7:12). He did not need a watch set over him. He just wanted to be left alone (Job 7:16).

The question that is the subject of this study (Job 7:17-18) is found in both testaments of God’s Word. It is a question that has

warranted consideration in every dispensation of time. The question appears a total of four times in the Scriptures:

- “What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him? And that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?” (Job 7:17-18).
- “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” (Psa. 8:4).
- “LORD, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him! or the son of man, that thou makest account of him!” (Psa. 144:3).
- “But one in a certain place testified , saying , What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?” (Heb. 2:6).

By comparing these passages, we get invaluable insight into what the inspired writers were intending to convey by making this inquiry. To magnify man is to set the heart upon him. It is to be mindful of him, to take knowledge of him, and to make account of him.

Perhaps, the most interesting thing about the occurrences of this question in Scripture is the fact that they come from very different viewpoints. Job’s question was asked from the standpoint of scrutiny, while David and Paul’s questions were asked from the standpoint of salvation. Job wondered why the Almighty found man worthy of His wrath. David and Paul wondered why the Almighty found man worthy of His grace. Although there were great differences in why Job, David, and Paul asked their questions, there were two things upon which they agreed—the insignificance of man (what is man) and the interest of God (that thou art mindful of him). It should be noted that these two things are closely related to one another. After all, it is the insignificance of man that makes the interest of God so amazing. With Job, David, and Paul, we are moved to asked, “What is man, that thou art mindful of him?”

It seems clear that God is mindful of man because of two main things. First, God is mindful of man because of who He is. John declared, “God is love” (1 John 4:8; 1 John 4:16; cf. 2 Cor. 13:11). It is God’s nature to be mindful of others, especially of the weak (John 3:16; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Tim. 2:3-4; Exo. 34:6-7; Psa. 68:5; Deu. 10:18). Second, God is mindful of man because of who man is. Man is God’s creation, made in His image for His pleasure (Gen. 1:26-27; Rev. 4:11). It makes sense for God to care about His creation. It especially makes sense for God to care after Calvary. After all, man was redeemed at awful cost (1 Pet. 1:18-19). To not be mindful of man would be to ignore the death of His own Son.

The Bible reveals that three people/groups are mindful of man—the Almighty, the adversary, and the angels. Amazingly, each of these beings is recorded in the book of Job. Let us examine how each of them were interested in man.

The Almighty Is Mindful Of Man

God asked Satan, “Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?” (Job 1:8). These words clearly reveal that God had considered Job. After all, God spoke of Job as His servant and spelled out four sterling characteristics that made him so. God could not have given this designation and description of Job unless He had given great consideration and thought to Job. Furthermore, please note that God said that there was “none like” Job in the earth. Does not this reveal that God had considered not only Job, but every other man in the earth? At least, I know that God had considered Job’s friends. He would rebuke them for what they had said about Him in their conversations with Job (Job 42:7-9).

The second time that Satan appeared before Him, God again asked Satan if he had considered his servant Job. We read, “And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast

his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause” (Job 2:3). Clearly, God had continued to be mindful of Job through the first round of afflictions. After all, God spoke of how Job “still” held “fast his integrity.”

Perhaps, the ultimate evidence that God was mindful of Job was what He did for Job when the trial was over. He gave Job “twice as much as he had before” (Job 42:10; Job 42:12-13). He showed Job great pity and mercy (Jam. 5:11). Like David and Paul, Job must have wondered why God would show such grace to one as insignificant as he.

The Adversary Is Mindful Of Man

God was not the only one who was mindful of Job. Satan, Job’s adversary, was also mindful of him. No doubt, in his travels, Satan had laid traps for Job many times (Job 1:7; Job 2:2; 1 Pet. 5:8). When God asked Satan if he had considered Job, the text clearly revealed that he had. We read, “Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face” (Job 1:9-11). Please note that Satan did not say, “Who is Job?” He knew exactly who he was. Furthermore, Satan knew all about Job’s substance and how much it had increased. When Satan was given permission to afflict Job, he took away everything that Job had. He did not miss anything (Job 1:1; Job 1:3-19).

When Satan appeared before God the second time, he again revealed that he had given consideration to Job. He declared, “Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face” (Job 2:4-5). Clearly, Satan had given much thought to Job. He had done much thinking about why the first round of temptations had not worked. Furthermore, he had given much thought to what might work this time.

In the New Testament, we see Satan giving much thought to another one of God's servants—Simon Peter. To his overconfident disciple, Jesus declared, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat" (Luke 22:31). Satan wanted to run his fingers through Peter's life. Surely, he wants to do the same with us.

The Angels Are Mindful Of Man

Twice the book of Job speaks of a day when "the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord" (Job 1:6; Job 2:1). The sons of God were angelic beings (Job 38:7). Although we do not specifically read of their being mindful of Job in the book that bears his name, it is reasonable to conclude that they were. After all, they were present each time when Satan made his challenge (Job 1:6-12; Job 2:1-8). No doubt, they would have been interested in what was going to happen. They would have been interested in whether God or Satan was right about Job.

The New Testament makes clear that the angels are interested in things that happen in the lives of men. Peter wrote, "Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into" (1 Pet. 1:12). Please note that the angels desire to look into the unfolding of God's plan. They want to know how things are going to work out. Not only are they interested in a general sense, they are interested in a specific sense. They are interested in the response of individuals to the gospel of God. They rejoice when one sinner repents (Luke 15:10; cf. Luke 15: 7).

Conclusion

If the Almighty, the adversary, and the angels are mindful of man, and they clearly are, should not man be mindful of himself? Should not man examine himself closely to make sure that he is what he needs to be (2 Cor. 13:5)? As insignificant as man is in many

senses, he possesses an immortal soul that is worth more than the world (Mat. 16:26). No doubt, it is this part of man which warrants so much interest.

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CHAPTER 6

What Job's Friends Did Right And Wrong

Jeff Archey

How blessed we are to have friends in our lives. Think for a moment about the blessing of your friends and how precious they are to you in every moment of your life, whether good or bad. We often say, “Where would we be without good friends?”

The Bible says much about friends and friendship. First, the Bible tells us expressing love and friendliness is a **sign** of friendship.

“A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother” (King James Version, Pro. 18:24). There is a saying that “it all begins with me.” Extending friendliness is a sign to others that you are willing to be a friend; basic, but true.

“A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity” (Pro. 17:17). The apostle Paul reminds us how love is the greatest of all (1 Cor. 13:13). Our love is the foundation for all the other things that friendship is built upon. The initial friendliness grows into love.

“Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up” (Ecc. 4:9-10). Friends are always there to lift each other up.

Second, the Bible speaks of the **strengths** of friendship. How often do we turn to a friend for good advice and wisdom in various matters?

“Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel” (Pro. 27:9).

“Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend” (Pro. 27:17).

“Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful” (Pro. 27:6). There are those occasions when we know a friend is telling us something for our own good. We may not want to hear their advice and it very well may hurt, but we know our friends have our best interests at heart. Sometimes a criticism will help us grow more than a compliment. “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Heb. 12:11).

Third, the Bible speaks of concerning the **security** of friendship. “Thine own friend, and thy father’s friend, forsake not; neither go into thy brother’s house in the day of thy calamity: for better is a neighbour that is near than a brother far off” (Pro. 27:10). Friendship is a two-way street and as the love, strength, and advice come our way, we in turn must show the same compassion and love at all times as a friend.

And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. (Luke 10:27-28)

Friends are one of our most precious possessions. When we think of our friends, the qualities just considered should be evident. And, of course, our true test as a friend to others should be reflected in the passages just considered.

Within our study of the book of Job, one finds it of necessity to consider the friends of Job—Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. Of the forty-chapters in the book of Job, nine of them express the views of these three friends of Job. Next to Job, these three men combined comment more than anyone in the book. Job friends

did some things right...and some things wrong. Let us examine both the right and wrong of their approach and comments and let us bring some application to help us as we deal with others who are suffering and grieving.

What Job's Friends Did That Was Right

The individual speeches of Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar comprise nine of the books forty-two chapters in the book of Job. As we are introduced to them, we find that their initial decisions and arrival were well-thought-out and planned. Let us examine the things done right.

The Initial Response

Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him. (Job 2:11)

They heard. The Bible is silent as to the length of time that Job endured the suffering Satan inflicted upon him and when word arrived to his friends. We understand Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar were in three different places; whether they resided in the same area or were in three different cities is not known or relevant to our study. As their intention was to mourn with Job, there is no question they were touched by hearing of the losses and suffering their friend was enduring.

They came. Immediately we see friends that knew they were needed. With their intentions well placed, they knew they had to go to Job to bear his burden and strive to lighten his emotional load.

They came with an appointment. While years before the inspired words of Solomon would express, "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labor" (Ecc. 4:9), Eliphaz,

Bildad and Zophar worked together to arrive and comfort their friend Job.

They came to mourn. “To mourn” expresses sympathy or in some meanings, “to spare” or “have compassion on.” But, further research of the word just might indicate that with mourning also comes correction:

This to and fro movement is also typical of the nodding of one's head ‘as a sign of pity that sympathizes with one and **recognizes the magnitude of the evil.**’ Whether or not this action was always understood when this root appears is uncertain, but the attitude so symbolized is (Copps 561; boldness emph., JA).

Could this Hebrew meaning of *mourn* in “recognizing the magnitude of the evil” move Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar toward the wrong positions they brought forth? As humans, it is possible.

They came to comfort. As we see the weeping in verse 12, this embraces comfort as “sorrow with compassion.” As we will note, this they failed to do, but their intent was to come and ease Job as they could. Let us apply the examples of Job's three friends.

Will we seek out the opportunity to “bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2)?

Will we labor together with one another to lessen the burdens of our friends? Such work and diligence will let the world know about our Savior. “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34-35). Several years ago, we tragically lost one of our faithful teenagers in an automobile accident. The impact upon our congregation was heartbreak and a deep hurt-for we had lost one of our brethren. After the funeral, the family returned home where the congregation had brought food for them and their family, but some of our ladies arrived to serve, to clean, and to do whatever was

needed. A lady commented to one of our dear sisters how so much was done for this family by the congregation, and the lady asked the dear sister, “Do you do this for every member?” Our sister replied, “Yes, we do,” to which the lady paused and said, “I need to change my thinking about the church of Christ.” This is not to bring attention to anything that is done or to see something we did as a congregation of the church of Christ—numerous congregations respond the same way. But, I am thankful this lady could see Christ in us and that we were serving as our Savior served (Col. 1:27; Phi. 2:1-11).

Will we simply mourn with a friend? Sometimes a hug and a tear express love and care more than anything we could say. Consider the “shortest verse” in the English translation, “Jesus wept” (John 11:35). While noted and quoted as the shortest verse, it is long on its teaching. I think of our Savior who knew He would raise Lazarus (John 11:11; John 11:23-26), yet, “When Jesus therefore saw her (Mary) weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit and was troubled” (John 11:33). His love for Lazarus was evident to others (John 11:36) due to His weeping. There is no shame in weeping—our Lord did so.

Will we comfort with words and service? Some will never remember every word said in suffering, but people will remember that you were there and will thank you for your help by simply serving. Paul explained, “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God” (2 Cor. 1:3-4). The answer to each of these questions should be a resounding yes.

The initial impression

And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice, and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven.
(Job 2:12)

They lifted up their voice and wept. This was part of their intention for traveling to Job. The expression of tears and emotion cleanses the body of hurt and pain. Renting or tearing their mantles or robes and spreading dust upon their heads are true expressions of mourning. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar expressed their grief as was the custom in the land akin to our grieving, holding one another and helping one another bear up under the sufferings we face.

The initial reply

So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great. (Job 2:13)

For seven day and nights, Job's friends sat with him upon the ground, said nothing, and observed his grief. I recall a woman who said she could not remember everything that was said to her upon the passing of a loved one, but she remembered the hugs and cares of so many that came to comfort her. Sometimes a simple handshake or hug followed by "I'm sorry and I am praying for you" is as sufficient as "trying to find words to say."

As we note, Job's friends did much good in planning and upon arrival. If we simply patterned our response with the above approach, we would ease grieving souls. We see a wonderful pattern and example from the long ago. "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4).

What Job's Friends Did That Was Wrong...Collectively

From the outset, we know the aim of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar:

Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one

from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him. (Job 2:11)

Seven days later as their period of silence concluded, we find three friends with an intended purpose that seems to modify itself from their hearts and their expression of words. Pharr comments:

But it is not human nature to accept helplessness for very long. Silently sharing another's burdens may become too much of a burden for friends to bear. Without realizing it, our compulsion to do something, to say something, may not be so much to lift the burden from a friend, as to get the burden off ourselves. Job's friends began to speak, to explain and advise. Without any real understanding, they reached wrong conclusions and suggested foolish solutions. Thinking to explain Job's tragedy, they insulted his integrity. Having come to help lift the load, they only increased his burdens – 'Miserable comforters are ye all (16:2). (165)

The intention of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar to mourn and comfort was not accomplished in the heart of Job, thus becoming "miserable comforters." When we consider the following overview of Job's feelings, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar failed to accomplish their original goal and aim of comfort:

Job felt no pity (Job 6:14; Job 19:21-23).

Job felt his friends were deceitful (Job 6:15).

Job was scared and terrified (Job 7:14).

Job desired to be left alone (Job 10:20).

Job felt they were not listening to him (Job 13:3-6).

Job desired one to plead with him (Job 13:17-19).

Job felt as an enemy to his friends (Job 13:24).

Job felt scorned by his friends (Job 16:20).

Job felt broken in pieces by their words (Job 19:2).

Job felt his friends had turned against him (Job 19:19).

Jim Laws observed:

Their position is that the righteous are rewarded, and the unrighteous are punished, and that Job, therefore, was a willful sinner in need of repentance. Precisely stated, they contend (1) all suffering is just punishment for sin, (2) Job is suffering, (3) therefore, Job is a sinner receiving just punishment for sin. At this point it may be observed that the friends are contending that there is no innocent suffering. They contend that there is a type of cause and effect relationship which says that a man gets what he deserves and gets such immediately that is, in this life. (13-14)

Laws makes a valid point, and it seems Job's friends' original intention of comfort shifts more to a conviction that Job had sinned. We see this from the following excerpt of their individual speeches.

Eliphaz states "Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?" (Job 4:7)

Bildad's comments, "If thou wert pure and upright; surely now he would awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous" (Job 8:6).

Zophar's thought, "But oh that God would speak and open his lips against thee...Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth" (Job 11:5-6).

In other words, there is no innocent suffering; therefore, Job has sinned and brought this upon himself.

Of course, because we can read the first two chapters we know such was not the case with Job. The book of Job begins, “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, one that feared God, and eschewed evil” (Job 1:1). As readers of the book of Job, we know Job’s suffering was because Satan wanted to prove God wrong concerning Job. God did not doubt Job’s faith, but Satan did. Job did not sin in causing his suffering,

We know that all suffering is not the result of sin in the New Testament. While simply out walking with His disciples one day,

He [Jesus] saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. (John 9:1-3)

Jesus made it clear that it was not the sin of this man or of anyone else that brought blindness upon the man. Suffering is never the result of the specific sin of a man, but suffering is a result of sin entering the world (Gen. 3:15ff).

Eliphaz and Bildad go even further declaring that Job’s children were not spared because of Job’s sin (Job 5:2-4) and their own sin (Job 8:3-6). But, Scripture does not bear this teaching out:

The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. (Eze. 18:20)

At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of

heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. (Mat. 18:1-3)

Collectively, the friends handled matters inappropriately. Please recall Elihu's early response concerning Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. "Also against his (Job's) three friends was his wrath kindled, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job" (Job 32:3). As Elihu began speaking, he exclaimed, "Yes, I attended unto you, and, behold, there was none of you that convinced Job, or that answered his words" (Job 32:12). Yet, Elihu did not have the final say on the matter, but the Lord did,

And it was so, that after the LORD had spoken these words unto Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. (Job 42:7)

What Job's Friends Did That Was Wrong...Individually

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar each expressed incorrect views on Job's condition.

Eliphaz (Job 4-5, 15, 22)

There is an assurance of tomorrow (Job 5:25-26). How did Eliphaz know the seed of Job would be great and that Job would live a "full age" or long life? Answer: he did not and neither do we (Jam. 4:13-17).

Speaking of matters that he did not know (Job 15). Eliphaz was judging by appearance and not judging "righteous judgment" (John 7:24). Simply, Eliphaz did not know all the facts. If we do not know, we do not know. How quick are we to speak without knowing all the facts of a matter?

False accusations with no proof (Job 22:6-9). Building on the premise of his second speech, Eliphaz presents six false accusations such as dishonesty (Job 22:6), not feeding the hungry (Job 22:7), and depriving the widows and fatherless (Job 22:9). Yet, Job held firm with his response, “Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food” (Job 23:12).

Bildad (Job 8, 18, 25)

The tradition of men (Job 8:8-10). Bringing forth the teaching of man, Bildad argued how the righteous prospers, but the wicked is afflicted. Using the tradition of man as a guide of truth was condemned by our Lord (Mark 7:1-13; Mat. 15:1-9). David reminds us to “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass” (Psa. 37:7). David did not acknowledge the physical suffering of the wicked.

Bildad failed to listen. Interestingly enough, Bildad states the defeat of the wicked in Job 18, yet he mistakenly applies it to Job. In his final speech, Bildad does not reply directly to Job’s speech but rather makes a plea for man to be humbled in the sight of God. The faithfulness and conviction of Job would not disagree with these two points. Bildad had some good teaching, but lousy application. Had Bildad truly listened to Job’s pleas, he would not have brought forth irrelevant arguments. In relationships, we must focus on the problem and not the person in order to address matters clearly. As in the words of the Greek philosopher Epictetus, “We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak.”

Zophar (Job 11 and 20)

Thinking for God (Job 11:5-6). “But oh that God would speak, and open his lips against thee; And that he would show thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is! Know that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth” (Job 11:5-6). How did Zophar know that? Of course, he did not. It is interesting that Zophar actually contradicts himself in the following verses, “Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the

Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?" (Job 11:7-8).

It is as if Zophar is saying, "Job, I know, but you cannot know." A post-modernistic view of Zophar, is it not?

Rash response (Job 20). "Therefore do my thoughts cause me to answer, and for this I make haste. I have heard the check of my reproach, and the spirit of my understanding causeth me to answer" (Job 20:2-3). Interestingly enough, Zophar presents some great truths concerning the hypocrite (Job 20:5) and the demise of the wicked (Job 20:6-29), but the application to Job was misplaced.

Rash responses come forth when we are thinking of what we are **going** to say while we **should be listening** to what the other person says. Job's immediate response seems to reflect Zophar's rash response,

Hear diligently my speech, and let this be your consolations. **Suffer me that I may speak**; and after that I have spoken, mock on. As for me, is my complaint to man? and if it were so, why should not my spirit be troubled? Mark me, and be astonished, and **lay your hand upon your mouth**. (Job 21:2-5, bold emph. mine, JA)

Conclusion

And it was so, that after the LORD had spoken these words unto Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the

thing which is right, like my servant Job. So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the LORD commanded them: the LORD also accepted Job. (Job 42:7-9)

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar responded as the Lord commanded. They understood they had not spoken as the Lord would have had them to speak. They understood their approach and aggressiveness in persuading Job to repent was unfounded.

It is easy for us as Bible students to criticize and question Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar and wonder about their approach to a suffering, grieving Job. However, in our study and observations, we must not become as they were. We can be guilty of criticizing Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar by using the same approach they did. We ourselves as comforters of others must embrace and learn from their mistakes in order that we not repeat their approach.

But the account is not complete. “They lived happily ever after” is a wonderful ending to every story. As this inspired account concludes, we are blessed by such an ending in seeing forgiveness of wrong for Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar who did the right thing in response to the Lord’s commands. No matter what they said, the Lord forgave them upon response to His commands. Please recall the words of James, “Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy” (Jam. 5:11). The end of the Lord for Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar granted pity, tender mercy, and forgiveness.

It is imperative that we live and learn in life’s way that we can improve from our mistakes and grow more in a divine completion (2 Tim. 3:17). It seems that Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar were allowed this very thing.

Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, **and all they that had been of his**

acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold. (Job 42:11, bold emph. mine, JA)

It appears that Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar had another chance to mourn and comfort their friend, Job. This time, after growing in knowledge and obedience to the Father, the three friends got it right.

May we press onward, grow, and overcome until we get it right.

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CHAPTER 7

Thus Did Job Continually: Spiritual Constancy

Chuck Webster

Most of us recognize areas of inconsistency in our lives. Many of those areas may be relatively insignificant, at least when compared to others. Maybe we failed to keep our resolution to eat a healthy diet or exercise regularly. We did well for a few weeks, perhaps, maybe even a few months, but at some point we lost focus and once again embraced old habits.

But some things matter more than physical health, of course. God created us in His image, and we will continue to exist long after the physical body has decayed. Areas that address this part of us—our souls—demand urgency. We dare not fall into the pattern of inconsistency that may plague other aspects of our lives.

The great Old Testament character Job is a model of spiritual constancy, and though he does not know it when his story begins, he will lean on it again and again in the trials he later faced. The patriarch's attention to constancy reflects a common emphasis throughout Scripture. Near the end of his first letter to the troubled Corinthians, Paul encouraged them: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (New King James Version, 1 Cor. 15:58). He warned "that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting" (Eph. 4:14). He urged the Colossian Christians to "continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast," and to avoid being "moved away from the hope of the gospel" (Col. 1:23).

Some first-century Jewish Christians were losing their faith, and an entire letter was written to encourage them to be spiritually constant: “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful” (Heb. 10:23).

Facing his predominantly pagan world, Job recognized the need for spiritual constancy. He offered sacrifices on behalf of his family, suggesting that his primary concern for them was their relationship to God. Apparently it was not merely an occasional practice. “Thus did Job continually” (King James Version, Job 1:5) seems to be a reflection of his character, and his example stands as perhaps the oldest biblical example of the importance of consistency. What does his example say to believers today? How can we learn to grow in spiritual constancy?

Areas of Concern

Constancy is crucial in several areas of the Christian life. Here are three:

Spiritual disciplines

In a fast-paced world, sometimes it is difficult to do everything that needs to be done. Jobs are often time-intensive, with expectations that stretch many Christians to the limit. Life includes many other challenges as well, ranging from family commitments to home maintenance to financial responsibilities. Because of this, some Christians find themselves neglecting those avenues through which God works to bring their faith to maturity.

One way God works is through His Word. Because Scripture is God-breathed, it “is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). It “is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12). When the believer stores the Word in his heart, it helps him avoid sin (Psa. 119:11). When he delights in it and meditates on it day and night, God blesses him with strength and

vitality (Psa. 1:1-6). For those reasons God wants the Word to dwell richly in His children (Col. 3:16). Christians should “desire the pure milk of the word” so that we might grow (1 Pet. 2:2).

It is an undeniable fact that the Word will not strengthen what it does not touch. When we let life’s demands cause us to neglect daily Bible reading, we miss out on God’s Spirit working through His Word to strengthen, mature, and disciple us. Often the first step toward constancy in faith is simple: start reading and meditating on the Word of God, and do it daily.

The same principle applies to other spiritual disciplines as well. The “fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (Jam. 5:16), and Christians ought to maintain a constant attitude of prayer (1 The. 5:17). God also uses fasting to help believers reflect on their dependence on Him, though this discipline is neglected by many believers today. Jesus seems to assume that His followers will fast after His ascension, however (cf. Mat. 6:16-18; Mat. 9:14-17). It might be the case that those of us who struggle the most in our lack of constancy might find the greatest benefit through fasting.

God also intends for His children to worship Him regularly (cf. John 4:23-24). Early Christians assembled weekly to honor Christ for His sacrifice and to worship God (Acts 20:7). Through worship, Christians grow closer to their Creator, deepening their adoration and respect for the One who gave Himself for them. One of the signs of believers struggling in their faith was inconsistency in attending these regular assemblies (Heb. 10:25).

Parenting

It is frightening to observe trends among today’s youth. Our schools are characterized by levels of violence, disrespect, and immorality that they have never seen before. Teenagers are embracing habits and lifestyles that previous generations could not have imagined. Where does the fault lie? Our educational system certainly has flaws, but the problem begins long before students enter their first classroom. The fact is, many children are growing up in homes with inconsistent oversight and guidance. They have

busy, neglectful parents who are failing to provide them with a home environment that promotes genuine character.

Christian homes must be different. The psalmist writes that “children are a heritage from the LORD, [and] the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate” (Psa. 127:3-5). Just before God’s people entered Canaan, God emphasized the importance of the parents’ role in shaping future generations: “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up” (Deu. 6:6-7). Paul charged fathers: “Do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4).

What children need more than ever is for their parents to take their responsibility seriously. Children need discipline, guidance, teaching, and love, and they need it consistently. Parents who punish their children only after they have lost control of their anger practice an inconsistent and harmful kind of discipline. Those who are present with their children only when it is convenient leave this important role to surrogate caregivers who cannot give what God intended parents to provide. Our children need—the church and world need—parents who are spiritually constant in their homes.

Marriage

As with parenting, twenty-first-century marriages are following a deadly trend. Over a million American couples divorce every year, and millions of others struggle with disappointment and disillusionment. Christianity is not immune to the struggle, often reflecting the same patterns as the world around it. As a result, churches are affected, and many Christians fail to reach their spiritual potential because of problems at home.

God emphasized the importance of marriage from the very beginning. The Bible includes this note just after God joined the first man and woman in marriage: “Therefore a man shall leave his

father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). Paul echoed that emphasis in his writings, urging husbands to love their wives “as Christ also loved the church” (Eph. 5:25) and wives to respect and love their husbands (Eph. 5:33; Tit. 2:4).

What this means practically is that Christians need to work on their marriages constantly. Nothing about our present world is conducive to a healthy marriage. The spirit that pervades our world today is self-centered and lacks commitment—attributes that undermine the intimacy of marriage. It is insufficient to face problems when they arise. Marriage counselors often point to the fact that by the time couples enter counseling, the damage that has been done is almost irreversible. What is needed is daily attention to marriage. It should supersede all other earthly relationships, including that between parents and children.

Why Constancy Matters

God expects us to grow in spiritual constancy, and here are two reasons why:

The world is watching.

The most influential argument for unbelievers is not the existence of evil, pain, and suffering, nor is it the popularity of Darwinian evolution. What drives more people away from Christ today is inconsistency in the lives of people who claim to follow Him. In His most pointed diatribe, the Lord said, “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in” (Mat. 23:13). The Pharisees’ inconsistency not only kept them out of the kingdom, but it also drove would-be believers away.

Paul chastised the Corinthians for several sins, including their practice of taking one another to court. He seems incredulous as he writes to the church about it: “But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers!” (1 Cor. 6:6). What bothered him more than anything was what it said to the pagan world in Corinth. How

could believers allow their pettiness to cause them to show such inconsistency before a world that knew little of Christ?

Perhaps the same question could be asked of some Christians today. Unbelievers watch us, making judgments about our Savior based on what they see in us. If they see hypocrisy, they will probably conclude that Christ is fraudulent. But when they see consistency, they are more likely to consider the claims of Christianity more carefully. Just as hypocrisy closes the door of faith in people's hearts, so lives lived for Christ sow seeds of belief in the hearts of unbelievers.

Another area in which this principle holds true—with significant consequences—is the home. Children see one of two things in their parents who confess Christ. They see parents whose Christianity is superficial, a Sunday-only kind of faith. Or they see parents who imperfectly but genuinely follow Jesus Christ as their Savior. Children whose most influential example of Christianity is inconsistent and sporadic often choose to abandon the faith when they leave home. In contrast, the devil finds it hard to lead children away from Christ whose parents consistently followed the Lord.

Our faith will be tested.

The Bible does not say, but it is interesting to consider what King David's devotional life had been like leading up to that fateful spring afternoon. Certainly he had read the book of Psalms that contained so many songs that he had composed. Had he read the first Psalm recently? Psalm 1 emphasized what healthy faith looks like: "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper" (Psa. 1:1-3). The psalmist described a man of strength and faithfulness, but that fortitude is based on constancy in spiritual things. He delights in God's law and meditates on it daily. When David looked from his rooftop and saw Bathsheba, he faced a test of faith that would have consequences for the rest of his

life. On that particular day, the man after God's own heart found himself unprepared.

One of the main reasons to develop spiritual constancy is to prepare for those inevitable tests. As Job offered sacrifices for his children, he had no idea about what lay ahead. "Thus did Job continually," and if he had not he likely would have never survived the challenges that Satan brought into his life.

The same is true today, because our faith will be tested in different ways. "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution," Paul writes (2 Tim. 3:12). The apostle often found himself being persecuted by the enemies of Christ (2 Cor. 11:24-29). Jesus Himself told us to expect opposition in our lives as Christians: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Mat. 5:10-12).

Sometimes the tests present themselves to us as temptations to sin. Like David, we will face Satan's allurements to commit sexual sins—adultery, fornication, pornography. We will be tempted to lie and gossip and slander. We will face compromising situations at work and school, and we will be asked to confess or deny Christ.

We will also face the difficulties of life: poor health, rebellious children, difficult jobs, unyielding stress. When the sun rises, will we be scorched for lack of root (cf. Mat. 13:6)?

The only way to prepare for those tests is to be constant today. We read and meditate on Scripture now, so that God will prepare our hearts for the future. We pray and fast and worship so that we will be ready when the tempter comes. The question is never, Will our faith be tested? Instead, it is, Will we be ready when the test comes?

Developing Constancy

Every committed Christian wants to be more spiritually constant. In a real sense, we will never arrive spiritually (cf. Phi. 3:12-14), but God will continue to strengthen us as we walk with Him. We

can engage in several practices that will create an environment in which God will deepen our faith.

We should develop an eternal perspective.

When Paul urged the Corinthians to be “steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,” he closed that thought with these words: “knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58). He was reminding them that whatever sacrifices they were making would ultimately bring about eternal results: their work would not be in vain. He wanted them to think about why they did what they did.

Christians must develop the habit of thinking from an eternal perspective. In Colossians 3, Paul describes this struggle between the temporal and the eternal: “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory” (Col. 3:1-4). If we remain focused on earthly things, we will never be motivated to work on the inner self. We will never become spiritually constant.

Paul often wrote about this. “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:16-18). As Christians we discipline ourselves because we know that what we cannot see is much more significant than what we can. God is working in us a “far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

This must be a daily perspective. We wake up each morning and commit ourselves to choosing the things that feed our spirituality, not our flesh. That commitment will drive everything we do, including our attention to the spiritual disciplines, our response to temptations, and our attitude toward difficulties. Growing in spiritual constancy

will often be difficult—God develops our character more in fire than He does in comfort.

We should focus our eyes on Jesus.

The recipients of Hebrews were wavering in their faith, apparently leaving Christ for the Jewish religion that Jesus had fulfilled at the cross. The letter warned them about the consequences of abandoning Christ and urged them to consider the great Old Testament examples of faith (Heb. 11:1-40). But then the author writes this: “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:1-2). The greatest example of faith, he writes, is Jesus Christ.

Our greatest motivation for spiritual constancy is Jesus Himself. We think of Him daily and anticipate His return. The more we focus on Him, the more like Him we become: “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18). Notice the theme of anticipation throughout the New Testament: “So that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 1:7). “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phi. 3:20). Thoughts of Jesus permeate growing Christians’ hearts.

When we find that our spirituality is characterized by a lack of constancy, we should go back to Scripture and spend time meditating on Jesus. Read the gospel accounts about His life. Reflect on His teachings and miracles. Ask God to deepen your love for the Savior. As your relationship with Jesus grows, your faith will inevitably become more constant.

We should submit to God.

Among many Christians, there is a tendency for faith to be human-focused. We often emphasize human responsibility—

what we ought to do. Some of this is good, of course. It comes as a response to certain theological trends which overemphasize the sovereignty of God to the exclusion of human free will. But focusing on our responsibility must never take attention away from what God does. In fact, the Bible repeatedly stresses God's role in developing our spirituality. Notice the emphasis in these passages:

- “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might” (Eph. 6:10).
- “Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved” (Phi. 4:1).
- “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phi. 4:13).
- “Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy” (Col. 1:11).
- “You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 2:1).
- “But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you” (1 Pet. 5:10).

We do not have the innate ability to grow spiritually. Our self-discipline will never be strong enough, and our human efforts will always fall short.

If we want to grow more spiritually constant, we need to develop a more thorough focus on what God does. He will develop us through His Word. He will use our worship and prayer to mold us and shape us. When we are disappointed with our inconsistency—which will probably be often—we ought to spend time in communion with God, asking Him to accomplish His will in us. What He wants for us is to shape us into the image of His Son Jesus, and He will do His work in and through us as we learn to submit ourselves to Him.

Conclusion

Is there a greater need in the church today than that of spiritual constancy? Our attention to it will affect the strength of our congregations, our influence in our communities, and our marriages and children. Though he lived long before God's final revelation, Job recognized the need for daily faithfulness: "Thus did Job continually" (KJV, Job 1:5). May the same be said of us.

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CHAPTER 8

Wherefore Do The Wicked Live, Become Old, Yea, Are Mighty In Power

Bobby Liddell

This question from Job 21:7 is important with important implications. The man who asked the question was a real man with real problems. He was also a godly man who suffered as none other (Job 1:1ff). The reason for his suffering became the focus of discussion and the answer was that with which his friends and even Job himself struggled. Thus, the book of Job records the conflict of worldly wisdom and God's revealed will in dealing with the problem of why must good men endure pain and suffering, and why do wicked men prosper. This conflict, in the minds of men, continues. Is all suffering because of one's personal sin? Why do the wicked prosper and the godly suffer?

Job's friends concluded that his problems were not, in fact, a test of Job's character and faith, but were, obviously, visible, timely punishment for Job's sin. Their observation was that suffering is the lot of the wicked and theirs alone. Therefore, righteous men escape this pitiable plight, while those who sin suffer now, and those who suffer in this life, do so because of sin. Therefore, Job's suffering was proof of his sinfulness. Even Jesus' disciples had this false idea (John 9:1-2). The erroneous conclusions of Job's friends engendered their misbegotten theology and fostered their erroneous argument that Job's sufferings were (and had to be) a result of his sin. To them, the answer was simple. Job needed to repent in order to allay his

suffering. Job answered with the factual evidence that sometimes the wicked prosper; thus, his friends' conclusions were false (Job 21).

Why Do The Wicked Live?

The Bible records numerous instances of quick, conclusive punishment, sent from God, upon the wicked, expressly because of their sins (Num. 16:28-35; Acts 12:20-23; 2 Kin. 9:30-37; Luke 12:16-21; et al.). Jesus even taught so in Luke 13:1-5.

But such is not always the case. The truth is that the wicked often do well. The wickedest man in town might live in the mansion on the hill, drive the finest cars, dress in the latest styles, eat the best food, have an attractive mate, and lovely, talented, healthy, happy children who attend the best schools. Doors open for them socially, financially, and politically. The world looks at the prosperity the wicked man possesses and thinks, "I want to be like him." Even church members may envy the wicked who prosper and wonder how they can have what the wicked man has, or on the more troubling side, why they do not have what he has (Pro. 23:17; Psalms 37:1).

Why does God allow the wicked to live, become old, and grow mighty in power (Job 21:7)? We may not ever understand all the reasons. It could be because God spares them, for He desires their repentance, that they might use their influence for good (Luke 19:1-10). It might be that God is longsuffering in order to give them ample opportunity to learn the folly of worldliness and to turn to Him (Ecc. 12:13-14; cf. Rom. 9:22). Or it could be that He wills to use them for His purposes (cf. Dan. 3:15; Dan. 4:34-37). It might well be that God uses the apparent prosperity of the wicked to test the righteous and to teach godly men and women to look to His Word, not worldly wisdom, for guidance and to trust in Him, not in uncertain riches (Mark 10:24; 1 Tim. 6:17). That being the case, many have not fared well with this test.

Why Do The Wicked Become Old?

Job's friends declared that the righteous would be blessed, but the wicked would not continue, but would be cut off (Job 4:7). The truth

is that the wicked often live to old age and sometimes the righteous die young. Of the man who, according to the Bible, lived longer than any other, (969 years) there is nothing said but that he lived that long and may have died in the flood (Gen. 5:27). Wicked men eat, drink, and make merry. Often, they do all the wrong things, in all the wrong ways, for all the wrong reasons, and still live quiet, peaceable, long lives. They fulfill their lusts, satisfy their sensual desires, and die with smiles on their faces. Not only do they live, they are “lively,” and grow old, living in sin! The idea is that they endure and that their wealth endures and even increases as time goes by.

Thus, Job argues that the wicked do not suffer loss—as Job had. They do not lose their children—as Job did. They do not lose their wealth—like Job lost his. They do not lose their health—as had Job.

They grow old, surrounded by a beautiful, happy, healthy family, and they possess ever-increasing, fine flocks and herds, while they continue in robust vigor, and uninterrupted peace. The point Job pursued is this: if suffering is always an incontrovertible indicator of God’s punishment of the sinner, how is it that sometimes sinners escape that fate?

How does Satan fit into this picture? Satan makes sin look appealing and profitable (Gen. 3) and he appeals to our emotions (Heb. 3:13). According to him, wicked people live to a ripe, old age, so enjoy life, and do not worry about God. Job was not arguing Satan’s case in agreement with his evil purposes and to encourage sinful living, but Job was sarcastically pointing to the facts that his friends had ignored. Why do good people suffer? Sin may bring suffering, and all suffering has been caused by sin (Gen. 3), but some good people suffer innocently. Job’s friends told him that he suffered because of his sins (Job 4:8-9), that his children died because of their sins (Job 8:3-4), and that Job’s plight was really easier than his iniquity deserved (Job 11:6).

One of the most attractive aspects of sin is that some seem to prosper while sinning, in spite of sinning, even because of sinning. Job uses this fact, again in a sarcastic way, to answer his friends. They have accused him of being a wicked person; therefore, their

conclusion is that is the reason he has suffered. His response is to point to the wicked and note their seeming “blessings.”

In our day, some mistakenly conclude that the child of God will never suffer loss, damage, financial reversal, or personal tragedy, either to himself, or to those whom he loves. The other side of that coin is the misconception that the wicked person will face daily punishment for his sins as evidenced by the endless tragedy that comes into his life. I was teaching a Bible class, and we came to the problem of suffering. One sister adamantly affirmed that if one suffered, the reason was that he had sinned. She noted that if one was sick, he had sinned, and if one's house burned, it was because of his sin and was punishment from God. I directed her to Biblical answers, none of which she accepted. As a matter of fact, she became very noticeably upset. The next week, the good sister was absent, because she had the flu! I could hardly wait for her to return so I could ask her what sin she had committed.

Why Do The Wicked Become Mighty In Power?

The wicked often “are mighty in power”; that is, they grow powerful in wealth and find comfort therein. Job's friends had asserted that the righteous have God's blessings and His providential protection, while the wicked receive God's punishment in this life. To them, Job was the poster boy for God's righteous reaction to sin. How is it then that wicked men prosper in this world? Many times, for them, there is not the least hint in this world that God has looked upon them with disfavor. This irrefutable truth, presented by Job, disproved the faulty reasoning of the friends.

The question continues to this day: “How can the God of all holiness allow the unholy to be ‘rewarded’ with temporal blessings” (cf. Mat. 5:45)? That one who refuses God and His blessings could have the best this world has to offer seems to be against all for which God stands. Likewise, that one who keeps God's law should suffer surely seems to be contrary to God's promise to His children. The wicked often seem to enjoy the good life, but righteous Job longed for death and cursed the day he was born (Job 3). Why?

A real problem with finite, mortal man's assessment of the justice of the infinite, eternal God is that we are bounded by time, restricted in knowledge, and limited in vision. Therefore, as we view the prosperity of the wicked; we do so according to our imperfect evaluation of their outward appearance. It seems, now, that they really are prospering (cf. John 7:24). How can that be? The truth is that God does not always recompense the wicked immediately but reserves judgment for some and promises sure punishment for all the wicked in the future (2 The. 1:7-9). The wise man knew that, too (Ecc. 8:11-13). Even Job discussed the wicked (Job 21:8-15) and considered the contrast:

One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet. His breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow. And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure. They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them" (Job 21:23-26).

The Bearing Of Psalms 37 And 73 Upon Our Study

According to the lament of the inspired psalmists (David [Psa. 37] and Asaph [Psa. 73]), the wicked seem to prosper (Psa. 37:7; Psa. 37:35). At the outset, the discussion follows this course: the wicked do not suffer, or have trouble (Psa. 73:5-6), but they, instead, wear pride as a necklace (Psa. 73:6). In fact, they have all for which they could wish and more (Psa. 73:7), for they "prosper in the world; they increase in riches" (Psa. 73:12). The wicked speak evil (Psa. 73:8-10), for they speak against the righteous (Psa. 73:8), and they speak evil against God (Psa. 73:9). Yet, in spite of their arrogant, ungodly, unrighteous blasphemy, they get a "full cup" (Psa. 73:10).

How could this be? Why should ungodly people prosper when those who are godly suffer? The psalmist gives the hyperbolic situation of the wicked, as if it were a resume for successful living, fashioned after what the Devil would want God's people to believe.

Satan would have us to think that sin brings the “good life,” for after all, trying to live right does not prevent one’s facing the problems and pains that bring suffering. So, the question comes: “How can ungodly people, who rebel against God do so well?”

Like too many others, when the psalmist looked at the prosperity of the wicked, he almost lost his faith (Psa. 73:1-3). Prosperity refers to a peaceful, contented state, safe and sound, and without trouble. He envied the wicked; that is, he had jealous anger when he considered the seeming prosperity of the foolish (those who are proud and boastful, and who glory in themselves). The reflexive form means “to heat oneself with anger.” Why did he become so angry? His view was out of focus. He had seen the wicked prosper and had forgotten the real purpose of life—and he had forgotten that, in spite of how things may appear, our Holy God is in control. Like Peter, seeing our surroundings may well cause our faith to falter, but when we keep our eyes on Jesus, our faith is strengthened (Mat. 14:22ff).

When we look at the seeming prosperity of the wicked, from the worldly point of view, it becomes easy to envy the sinner’s situation, especially when the child of God suffers. We may find that we envy the sinner’s wealth or health or position, but envy and faith oppose one another. Envy makes one bitter; he feels sorry for himself and becomes angry. Envy destroys from the inside. One who entertains envy soon comes to the point of asking, “If the wicked prosper without serving God, then why should I serve God? Why should anyone serve God?”

One may wonder if godly living is in vain. If living for God brings suffering, and living for the things of this world brings success, why live for God? He may find himself wishing that he had chosen the path of the wicked because of their seeming prosperity. Consider the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). Both men died (Luke 16:22). If that were the end of their existence, and the end of the story, we could correctly conclude that the wicked, rich man won.

This passage helps us to know that the here and now is not all there is to life, and that seeming prosperity now does not equal true prosperity. Not only was the rich man, who was now the one

begging, doomed for eternity, but his evil influence, no doubt, would lead his five brethren into the same torment (Luke 16:24-31). The Christ succinctly stated the truth: “A man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15).

Where did the psalmist find the answer to the same question posed by Job? He found it in the sanctuary of God. God had the answer all the time. The psalmist learned the wicked are on slippery ground (Psa. 73:18), face desolation in a moment, and live in terror (Psa. 73:19). They are soon cut down (Psa. 37:2), for they prosper and pass away (Psa. 37:35-36). “Here and now” are all the wicked have. They destroy themselves (Psa. 37:15). They perish (Psa. 37:20). Even if he prospers for a lifetime, the wicked man will perish.

The wicked have not tricked God, for God sees, and the Lord will laugh at the wicked (Psa. 37:13); that is, God will mock and scorn him, not for a lack of compassion, but because of His knowledge of the vanity of the evildoer and his ultimate end. God knows the heart (Psa. 73:11), even when the wicked convince themselves He does not. When they awaken, they will find that God despises the imagination of their hearts (Psa. 73:20).

So, what should God’s people do? Trust in the Lord (Psa. 37:3) and do not worry. Get busy and do what is right in spite of who does wrong, who prospers, and who suffers (Psa. 37:3). Delight in the Lord (Psa. 37:4) and find happiness in God, and He will answer our prayers. Commit to God (Psa. 37:5-6). Rest in the Lord (Psa. 37:7). Wait patiently (Psa. 37:7), even when suffering. Cease from anger, forsake wrath, and do not indulge in it (Psa. 37:8). Fret not in any wise to do evil (Psa. 37:8). Turn loose of things and hold onto God (Psa. 73:23). Look to God for guidance (Psa. 73:24). Take comfort that when all else fails, God will be there (Psa. 73:25-26), knowing that God’s people will not be ashamed (disappointed), but will be satisfied (Psa. 37:19).

Conclusion

The idea that righteous men do not suffer was really an attack by Satan upon the deity and holiness of Christ. If Christ were innocent,

why did He suffer and die (cf. Isa. 53; Heb. 2:9; Heb. 10:9-10; Heb. 10:12; Phi. 2:5-8; Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22; et al.)? Job responded to the false assertions of his friends (that suffering proves the sufferer has sinned; that is, that all suffering is punishment for one's personal sin), by preaching to them a sermon on the seeming prosperity of the wicked (Job 21:1-16). If the wicked prosper, then the argument and conclusion of Job's friends (and Satan) must be wrong.

Still, many today have not learned the lesson. In what do we have our faith: in the things of this world or in the God who created the things of this world (1 John 2:15-17)? What is most important; that is, what has priority in life? Jesus commanded us to seek ye first the kingdom of God (Mat. 6:33). Paul wrote, "Seek those things which are above"..."Set your affection on things above" (Col. 3:1-2) and "godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6).

Job understood well that the wicked will meet their fate: "That the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction? they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath. Who shall declare his way to his face? and who shall repay him what he hath done? Yet shall he be brought to the grave, and shall remain in the tomb" (Job 21:30-32). The inspired Word states: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body," (2 Cor. 5:10). This includes wicked, prosperous men.

So, as the psalmist asked, how can we avoid fretting over the prosperity of the wicked? We must remember, "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked" (Psa. 37:16).

What will give hope now, and at the Judgment: material prosperity or spiritual blessedness? Do we want to face God as a prospering wicked person, or as a faithful child of God? The psalmist learned it is good to draw near to God and to declare God's works—instead of envying the wicked (Psa. 73:28; Psa. 73:24).

Job's friends missed it. Satan used their misconceptions to attack Christ. Job's response nailed it. We must understand that, although the wicked may seem to prosper now, and the righteous may suffer, the wicked will be punished in everlasting Hell, but eternal Heaven will be the reward of the faithful. Heaven will surely be worth it all.

CHAPTER 9

There Was A Man: The Historicity of Job And His Story

Eric Lyons

Over the last several centuries, many have attempted to fictionalize the Bible. Atheists vigorously attack the Genesis account of Creation, calling it nothing more than a fictitious story that should be placed alongside myths such as the Babylonian creation account. Skeptics scoff at the Biblical account of the worldwide flood, calling it an altered copy of the uninspired *Epic of Gilgamesh*. Liberal theologians labor to make Scripture conform to secular sources, claiming that the Israelite religion is a mere “Yahwization” of pagan religions (i.e., attributing to Yahweh what pagan religions attributed to their gods). Certain professors at Christian colleges have even cast doubt on the historicity of Jonah. They have referred to it as “just a short story” that “might even be regarded as historical fiction.” “[A] lot of books today” may “have a ring of historical accuracy,” they say, “just like the book of Jonah,” but “[d]oes that make it history? Well, no. No, it doesn’t” (Pemberton 22:26-22:44). Such attempts to fictionalize Scripture or cast doubt on the true nature of its historical accounts represent a blatant attack upon God’s Word and should be refuted with all diligence in “meekness and fear” (New King James Version, 1 Pet. 3:15).

Some believe the book of Job is little more than a fine piece of non-inspired literature. Others contend it is inspired of God, but, like happenings in Genesis and Jonah, the book of Job is said to be

a fictional story about imaginary people, places, and events, told for spiritual purposes. What do the facts reveal? Are there good reasons to believe that this story is a real, unembellished account of events that occurred long ago?

The Historicity of Job, the Man

In a single day, the patriarch Job was informed of the loss of all ten of his children, all of his livestock, and many of his servants. In chapter 1 of the book of Job, we learn that as one of Job's servants was telling him about a group of raiders (the Sabeans) that had stolen all of his oxen and donkeys and killed all the servants tending to the animals (save him), another servant arrived even as the first "was still speaking." This second servant told Job that a fire fell down from heaven and consumed his sheep and servants. Again, while this servant was talking, a third servant came and related to Job that another group of invaders (the Chaldeans) had stolen all of his camels and had killed all of the servants except him. Finally, while this third servant was talking, a fourth servant came and bore even worse news—Job's 10 children had all perished when a great wind struck the house and caused it to crush them. His seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, several servants, and ten children were all gone "in the blink of an eye." And as if being stripped of his worldly possessions and children were not enough, Job's body then became diseased from head to toe, his wife urged him to "curse God and die," and the comforting counsel of his "friends" quickly gave way to judgmental accusations.

Based upon the extent of his physical destruction and mental suffering, as well as the limited time frame in which it all occurred, some critics doubt that Job was a real person. They believe that he simply was fabricated to teach a lesson about human suffering. Perhaps, they say, he is to be valued like such parabolic figures as the good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37), the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32), or the rich fool (Luke 12:16-21), but not like those who actually lived and died upon the Earth.

I will never forget having a discussion about Job with a Christian gentleman several years ago, who, with a skeptical expression on his face, informed me that he did not believe the story of Job was real history. The idea was: “No one has ever gone through that much pain that quickly.” Up to that point in time, however, I do not think this brother had ever considered the overwhelming evidence for Job’s reality.

Job’s Humanity

Unlike the good Samaritan, the prodigal son, the rich fool, and other parabolic figures, the suffering patriarch of the Old Testament, whose story is recorded in forty-two chapters of the most beautiful language this world has ever known, was given a name—Job. The book begins: “There was a **man** in the land of Uz, **whose name was Job**” (Job 1:1, emphasis added EL). He was not just an obscure man in a far-away land who was the main character of a “once-upon-a-time” kind of fairytale. He was a real, “mortal” man (cf. Job 4:17), of whom his Creator said: “[T]here is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil” (Job 1:8). He “was the greatest of all the people of the East” (Job 1:3). That Job was a real person is stated explicitly by God in his second speech to Job, when He declared that the mighty animal called behemoth was “**made along with you**” (Job 40:15, emphasis added EL).

In the book of Job, the patriarch’s wealth is catalogued, his homeland is identified (cf. Jer. 25:20; Lam. 4:21), his father is referenced (Job 15:10), his children are numbered, his wife is quoted, his friends are named, his speeches are recorded, and his suffering is described in detail. Job spoke of his birth and even his conception (Job 3:3), and he longed for death in order to escape his severe distress (Job 6:8-10). His suffering was not here one day and gone the next, nor did it go on endlessly. It lasted for “months” (Job 7:3; Job 29:2) and was specifically characterized by boils (Job 2:7-8), bad breath (Job 19:17), loss of weight (Job 19:20), disfiguration (Job 2:12), blackened, cracked skin that was infested with worms (Job 30:30; Job 7:5), and bones that burned with piercing pain (Job 30:17; Job 30:30). Job’s suffering was as real as Job himself.

Job's Descent

Still, some may contend, “We know that Eliphaz was a Temanite, Bildad a Shuhite, Zophar a Naamathite (Job 2:11), and that Elihu was called, ‘the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram’ (Job 32:2), yet Job has no revealed heritage.” “Who was his father? Where is his genealogy? Why do we not know more about Job’s heritage, if he was a real person?”

The Bible is replete with real, historical men and women who have little, if any, background information given about them. Are we to assume that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego (Dan. 1:7), Theophilus (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1), Diotrephes (3 John 9), and Lydia (Acts 16:14) were all fictional characters because we have no information about their families? And what about Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18), who was “without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life” (Heb. 7:3)? Was he an imaginary character? In truth, Melchizedek is as historical as Abraham, who paid him tithes (Gen. 14:20; Heb. 7:2), and as real as Jesus, Who was a priest, “according to the order of Melchizedek” (Psa. 110:4; Heb. 7:17; Heb. 7:21)

Similar to how Melchizedek’s ancestry was intentionally omitted in Scripture in order to illustrate the perfect type of priest that Jesus, the great High Priest, would be, the little information that we have about Job was no doubt intentional. Admittedly, patriarchs are often introduced in the Biblical text with at least some genealogical information (e.g., Gen. 11:26-29), while Job is not. We know neither his family nor his race. We do not know for sure when he lived or exactly where he lived (i.e., precisely where Uz was cannot be said with certainty). However, as Perry Cotham concluded: “[T]his in God’s wisdom is all the better for the purpose of the great book because it makes Job a universal man, a representative, as it were, of all mankind in his relationship to God” (40). People of all colors, classes, clans, countries, and kingdoms can find great strength and encouragement from the real, true-life story of Job.

Job's Name

Let us also establish the fact that the name “Job” (Hebrew *Iyob* or *Iob* in the Septuagint) was no literary invention; it was an actual name worn by various ones throughout history. Jacob had a grandson named Job (Gen. 46:13; or Yob/Iob, ESV, NASB). Furthermore, as Francis Anderson noted in his commentary on Job, “The name [Job—EL] is attested several times throughout the second millennium BC as an old Canaanite name sometimes borne by royal personages. It occurs in an Egyptian execration text of the nineteenth century B. C. Later the Ugaritic *ayab* agrees with the South Canaanite name *A-ya-ab* in Amarna letters” (78). Although some believe that Job means either “object of enmity” or “he who turns to God” (Genung), the eminent and respected archaeologist W. F. Albright believes these ancient references support the explanation that the name originally meant, “Where is (my) Father?” (Hartley 66; Anderson 78). Such a meaning fits perfectly with the book of Job, considering (1) no father or genealogy is given for the patriarch, and (2) throughout his speeches, Job longs to speak with God, his Father by creation (Job 10:2-3; Job 10:9; Job 13:3; Job 13:20-22; Job 31:35-37).

Job's Anonymous Wife

Some have suggested that since the patriarch's wife is referred to but never named (Job 2:9; Job 19:17; Job 31:10), the book of Job falls in line more with a parable and not a literal story (cf. Cunningham). Such a claim, however, disregards two important points. First, several of the leading characters in the story **are** specifically named, including Jehovah, Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, Elihu, as well as three of Job's daughters: Jemimah, Keziah, and Keren-Happuch. Simply because someone in the story is not called by name, in no way relegates a story to a parable, especially when so many other individuals in the story are named. Second, there are **many** real, historical women in the Bible whose names are also unknown to us, including, and especially, the women of patriarchal times. Adam and Eve's daughters are never named (Gen. 5:4), nor are Lot's (Gen. 19). The wives of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth are omitted in Scripture even though they were crucial in God's plan for mankind

to repopulate the Earth. Other men living in patriarchal times whose wives' names are not mentioned by name in Holy Writ include Cain, Lot, Laban, and Potiphar. Furthermore, the names of many women in New Testament times remain unknown to us, including James and John's mother (Mat. 20:20), Peter's mother in law (Mat. 8:14), Jairus' daughter (Mat. 9:18), the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4), and many others (Luke 8:3). Obviously, then, the fact that Job's wife, who is only mentioned three times in the book of Job, is not referred to by name has no bearing whatsoever on the historicity of Job.

Other Citations of Job in Scripture

Not only are there several indicators within the book of Job that the suffering patriarch was a real, flesh-and-blood human being (and not just a parabolic figure), Job also is mentioned in Scripture outside of the book that bears his name. In fact, Job is mentioned in three different verses in Scripture (outside the book of Job), none of which lead one to believe that Job is a fictional character. Rather, he is considered an actual, historical figure.

The first two places his name is found (aside from the book of Job) is in Ezekiel 14, verses 14 and 20. In verse 14, the prophet stated: "Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness, says the Lord God" (Eze. 14:14). Verse 20 is worded nearly the same way: "[E]ven though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live, says the Lord God, they would deliver neither son nor daughter; they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness" (Eze. 14:20). Ezekiel's point in both verses was that the ungodly conditions in Babylon were such that even if Noah, Daniel, and Job lived in that city, no one else would be saved. Ezekiel spoke of all three of these men as being real, historical people, not legendary characters. If one recognizes Noah and Daniel as being real people of history, then there is no reason to think otherwise about Job. Yes, Job's story is written in beautiful, poetic language and grouped with other poetic books in the wisdom section of the Old Testament. Still, God's inspired prophet Ezekiel believed Job's life was as real and genuine as Noah's and Daniel's. [NOTE: Numerous real people and places are noted and described

in the poetic books of Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. It would be unwise and inconsistent to disregard Job's historicity merely because it is written largely in poetic language.]

The last place the suffering patriarch is mentioned in Scripture (and the only time he is mentioned in the New Testament) is found in the latter part of the book of James. The brother of the Lord wrote: "My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed we count them blessed who endure. **You have heard of the perseverance of Job** and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful" (Jam. 5:10-11, emphasis added). James was not writing through inspiration about an imaginary person. Rather, he considered Job as real as Abraham, Elijah, and Rahab—historical individuals whom James also mentioned in his epistle (Job 2:21; Job 2:25; Job 5:17).

Job's "Unbelievable" Suffering

More than anything else, what causes the most skepticism about Job are the intense losses that he endured in such a short time. How can a man learn of the loss of 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, numerous servants, and, most tragically, 10 children **in one day**? It simply is too much for some to believe.

Job and Evolution

Yet, some of the same individuals who doubt the historicity of the suffering of Job maintain that the theory of evolution is a fact. Both atheistic and theistic evolutionists believe that over billions of years of time, a multi-cellular creature evolved into a worm, which evolved into a fish, which evolved into an amphibian, which evolved into a reptile, which evolved into an ape-like creature, which evolved into a human. Allegedly, an amazing human being with functional eyes, ears, arms, legs, fingers, toes, lungs, etc., could evolve given enough time, mutations, and **random chance processes**? Supposedly, the unnatural, unproven, law-breaking theory of evolution is believable—but not the story of Job. "The lady doth protest too much, methinks" (Shakespeare III.2).

Others Throughout History Have Suffered Greatly

It may be that no one in world history has ever suffered as much as did Job in one day; however, there have been many tragic stories throughout history. Since likely everyone would agree that there have been innumerable true accounts of individuals and families throughout history losing virtually all of their wealth in the blink of an eye due to fires, floods, thefts, bankruptcies, depressions, stock-market plunges, etc. (e.g., Charles Prestwood, see Hundley), there seems little reason to document such financial losses. What's more, even if we did document many such unfortunate happenings, it would be greatly overshadowed by the loss of all of Job's children. When the life and death of those whom we love dearly comes into focus, often even the most materialistic among us see that financial ruin does not compare with the loss of loved ones.

But Job was also not the only one ever to have to deal with a great family tragedy in a short period of time. I know a woman who lost her mother and one of her two sons within one week of each other. She then buried her husband a year later. Portland, Oregon mother Marva Davis lost two sons on the same day—January 29, 2010. Her 23-year-old son died of a heart and kidney failure in the morning, followed by her 25-year-old son being shot by a police later that night (“Oregon Woman”). Alicia Appleman-Jurman was one of countless Jews who experienced heart-breaking losses and difficulties during the Holocaust. In addition to suffering and surviving ghettoization, imprisonment, starvation, a trip to an extermination center, and a firing squad, all within a four-year period, she lost every immediate family member. The Nazis shot her mother, father, and two of her brothers. One brother was hanged, while another died needlessly in a Russian prison. Alicia was the only member of her immediate family to survive the Holocaust (Appleman-Jurman).

Many Faithful Believers Have Experienced Great Pain

The Bible is full of faithful men and women who suffered greatly. Imagine the sorrow that Noah and his family felt as they watched and/or heard innumerable souls (perhaps millions of people) perish in the Flood—some of whom, no doubt, were relatives. Consider the

heartache that Lot, his wife, and daughters must have felt as their family members, friends, and home were destroyed with fire and brimstone—and then as Lot’s wife was turned into a pillar of salt.

The apostle Paul was “in prisons more frequently” and “in deaths often.” Five times he received 39 lashings. Three times he was beaten with rods. Once he was stoned. Three times he was ship wrecked (2 Cor. 11:23-25). In addition to being in all kinds of “perils” (2 Cor. 11:26), he was “in weariness and toil...in hunger and thirst,” as well as “in cold and nakedness” (2 Cor. 11:27). Paul was a persecuted apostle who suffered greatly, in addition to being in continual pain with some sort of “thorn in the flesh” (2 Cor. 12:7). The apostles as a whole were “made a spectacle to the world,” were “dishonored... poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless” (1 Cor. 4:10-11). They were “reviled,” “persecuted,” and “defamed” (1 Cor. 4:12-13). They were “made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things” (1 Cor. 4:13). In addition to inspiration informing us that the apostle James was killed with the sword (Acts 12:2), *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* indicates that Matthew was slain with a halberd, Mathias was stoned and beheaded, Andrew was crucified, Thomas was killed with a spear, Paul was beheaded, and Peter was crucified (most likely upside down) (Forbush 2-5).

Faithful men and women of God have been “tortured” (Heb. 11:35). “They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth” (Heb. 11:38b). “Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy” (Heb. 11:36-38a). Job is certainly one of the greatest examples of steadfastness in the face of suffering, but he is far from the only one to suffer severely.

A Modern-Day Tragedy

One of the most heart-rending, instant, unexpected tragedies to happen to a family in recent years occurred near Milwaukee, Wisconsin on Tuesday, November 8, 1994. Scott and Janet Willis

were traveling with six of their nine children on Interstate 94 to Watertown, Wisconsin to visit their older son, Dan, and his new wife, and to celebrate two upcoming birthdays. Before ever reaching Watertown, however, the Willis van struck a piece of metal that had fallen off a truck. The metal pierced the gas tank, which quickly caused gas to leak. “Seconds later, sparks caused as the metal bracket dragged against the pavement ignited the van” (Backover and Lev). The van “exploded in flames” (“Parents Bury.”). Five of the children in the van died almost instantly in the fire. Another escaped with burns covering 90% of his body, but died later that night at the hospital. Scott and Janet were hospitalized for several days with first and second degree burns. Such physical wounds, however, did not compare with the “indescribable” pain they felt at losing six children in one freak accident (Gillmore).

What are the odds of something like this happening? Sheriff’s Sergeant David Lushowitz commented on the accident, saying, “I’ve never seen an accident like this before.... **The odds are astronomical**” (as quoted in Backover and Lev, emphasis added EL). According to *Chicago Tribune* staff writers Backover and Lev, “Highway statistics support the characterization by Milwaukee investigators that the van accident was a **freak occurrence**” (emphasis added EL).

Remembering the Circumstances of Job’s Suffering

Although man has documented many cases of severe, instantaneous suffering throughout history, some still refuse to believe the events in Job (especially chapters 1, 2, and 42) actually could occur. In an article titled “Could the Story of Job be a Parable?” Chuck Cunningham wrote: “Four calamities result from Yahweh talking to the accuser. There is one survivor in each calamity to tell the story of Job. What are the odds of this happening?... Job begins with seven sons and three daughters, which all die. Job ends up with another seven sons and three daughters. What are the odds of that happening?” The idea is: “It is too much, too soon—all of which is too ironic.”

Admittedly, even in light of the cases of acute suffering that secular history has recorded for us, Job’s affliction does seem somewhat

inconceivable. However, there is one important point to remember: **Job's story does not begin in Job 1:13** (when the Sabeans first came and stole all of Job's oxen and donkeys and killed all of the servants in the area). The story of Job's suffering begins in **Job 1:6**, on the day Satan came before the Lord. When God mentioned his faithful servant to Satan, the wicked one arrogantly implied that Job does not serve God for nothing (i.e., the Lord allegedly is not innately worthy of faithful service). God had blessed the patriarch and apparently had not allowed Satan to harm him as the devil went "to and fro on the earth" (Job 1:7), "seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). For reasons that God does not reveal, He allowed Satan temporary access to "all that he [Job] has" (Job 1:12), which later would even include his health (Job 2:4-7). In ways unknown to us, Satan orchestrated the murderous raids of the Sabeans and Chaldeans, the fire from heaven, the great wind, and the physical suffering that Job endured (Job 1:13-19; Job 2:1-7). The same Satan who tempted Adam and Eve to sin; the same devil who sought to ruin the perfect life of Jesus at His weakest point (Mat. 4:1-11); the same wicked one who "bound" a woman with "a spirit of infirmity eighteen years" (Luke 13:11; Luke 13:16) and "oppressed" many others in the first century (Acts 10:38), also afflicted Job immensely. Taking into account Satan's personal role in Job's acute, virtually instantaneous suffering, the "unlikely," "improbable" events become plausible.

How Could God Do This?

Some discount the historic reality of the book of Job, because they cannot reconcile an all-loving God with what He allowed to happen to Job and those around him. According to Cunningham, "This is not our Elohim,...but more like a Greek Yahweh who plays with the lives of men. These accounts contradict the rest of Yahweh's Word and Yahweh cannot contradict Himself...We have taken the Book of Job literally instead of taking it as a parable." Similarly, Kelvin Stubbs asked, "God allows this man to have all that matters to him taken away, his family killed...and we're supposed to be

inspired?...How can you love a God who treats one of his most devout followers in this manner?”

Did God Cause Job to Suffer?

In truth, it was **Satan** who “did this.” Yes, God did say to Satan: “[Y]ou incited Me against him [Job], to destroy him without a cause” (Job 2:3), and later, the book does speak of “all the adversity that the Lord had brought upon him” (Job 42:11). The fact is, however, these statements are examples of the idiomatic language found throughout Scripture, which actually express “not the doing of the thing, but the permission of the thing which the agent is said to do” (Bullinger 823). The Bible writers often alluded to God’s allowance of something to take place as having been done by the Lord. For example, 2 Samuel 24:1 indicates that God “moved David...to number Israel,” while 1 Chronicles 21:1 says that it was **Satan** who “stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel.” The meaning is: Israel suffered as a direct result of Satan’s workings in the life of King David, which God allowed.

Consider also that Moses recorded how “God hardened Pharaoh’s heart” (Exo. 7:3; Exo. 7:13; Exo. 9:12; Exo. 10:1; etc.). But God did not directly force Pharaoh to reject His will. Rather, God hardened his heart in the sense that God provided the circumstances and the occasion for Pharaoh to reject His will. God sent Moses to place His demands before Pharaoh, even accompanying His Word with miracles, but Pharaoh made up his own mind to resist God’s demands. God provided the occasion for Pharaoh to demonstrate his unyielding attitude, but He was not the author (or direct cause) of Pharaoh’s defiance (see Butt and Miller for more information). Similarly, God **permitted** Satan to afflict Job, but He did not directly cause Job’s suffering. It was “**Satan**” who “went out from the presence of the Lord, and struck Job” (Job 2:7).

Would a Loving God Really Allow Job and Others to Suffer?

Regardless of whether God “allowed” Job’s suffering or “caused” it, some do not believe that a loving God would remove His providential protection from a faithful servant, bring his name up to Satan for consideration, and allow Job and so many others (i.e.,

his wife, children, and servants) to suffer and even die. Such God-allowed suffering has led atheists to reject Job and God altogether, while causing certain professed Bible-believers to interpret Job as a parabolic drama. Since the “the evil, pain, and suffering argument” against God’s existence has been thoroughly and logically answered many times in the past (see Miller and Butt; see also Warren), we will only respond to the professed Christian’s accusation about Job—that the book must be parabolic because God would never treat someone like He treated Job, his children, and his servants.

How is a **parabolic** story about God allowing Satan to destroy Job’s children and servants, as well as cause great physical pain for Job, somehow acceptable, but not a **real-life** story? A parable may be a fictitious story, but it has a moral or spiritual meaning. The Greek word *parabole* (from which we get the English word “parable”) means “to throw alongside.” It is “a story by which **something real in life** is used as a means of presenting a moral thought” (Dungan 227, emphasis added EL). Even if Job was a parable (which the evidence is decisively against), how would that immediately solve the “problem” of God allowing Job and others to suffer? Whether a true-life story about God or a parabolic story, any God-inspired story about Himself is going to properly reflect His perfect attributes. Turning the book of Job into a parable in no way means that “nothing in the book as it relates to God is really what it seems to be.”

The fact is, God’s actions in the book of Job are real, and consistent both with His nature and with the rest of Scripture. God **is** all-loving (1 John 4:8), but such love is not contrary to God allowing His faithful followers to suffer. Even though He will not tempt His children to do evil (Jam. 1:13), God will test us (Gen. 22:1; Exo. 20:20) and discipline us (Heb. 12:3-11). He will even allow us to die, knowing that a much greater life awaits us on the other side of physical death (Heb. 11:10; Heb. 11:16; John 14:1-3). He allowed John the Baptist, Stephen, James the apostle, and many others to suffer and die. We must keep in mind, as Thomas B. Warren observed: God created the world, not as man’s final and ultimate destination, but as “the ideal environment for soul-making” (16). The difficulties that God

allows or even brings about in this life “encourage people to cultivate their spirits and to grow in moral character—acquiring virtuous attributes such as courage, patience, humility, and fortitude. Suffering can serve as discipline and motivation to spur spiritual growth and strength. It literally stimulates people to develop compassion, sympathy, love, and empathy for their fellowman” (Miller and Butt; cf. Warren 81).

But why did God allow Job’s children and servants to die? Why did He not spare their lives as He spared Job’s? God does not give us the answer to these questions. He does not tell us everything He knows, or that we might like to know (cf. Isa. 55:8-9; Deu. 29:29). What we can know is this: God always has a good reason for what He does. Perhaps He was rewarding Job’s 10 children and all of the servants with an early entrance into Paradise (cf. 2 Kin. 2:11; Phi. 1:21; Phi. 1:23). Or, if the children and servants were wicked, perhaps God used the occasion to punish them with physical death, just as He has done many times throughout history (Gen. 6-8; Gen. 19; Lev. 10:1-2; Num. 16; Acts 5:1-11). The fact is, one cannot assume that God’s allowance of Satan to kill Job’s children and servants is inconsistent with His omnibenevolent nature.

Conclusion

Although much about the book of Job remains a mystery (exactly when Job lived, who wrote the book that bears his name, where the Land of Uz was located, etc.), **we can know that he was a real person** who suffered greatly—perhaps like no person has ever suffered—and yet remained faithful to God. And therein lies one of the main purposes of Job’s preserved story: the patriarch is an inspiration to every child of God Who is determined to follow the Lord “in the paths of righteous,” even while walking “through the valley of the shadow of death” (Psa. 23:3-4). Knowing that Job persevered through all his trials and tribulations gives us hope that we can do the same when similar trials come our way (Jam. 1:2-4; Jam. 5:10-11).

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CHAPTER 10

If A Man Die, Shall He Live Again?

John Baker

Is there life after death? Many of life's most important decisions depend on that question; yet, the world has never been more confused about the answer than it is today. Modern evolutionary thinkers promote the ideology of naturalism: like the Greeks and Sadducees of old, they do not believe in the resurrection of the dead (New King James Version, Acts 23:8). Others today find it especially convenient to be agnostic. Concerning the resurrection of the dead they simply shrug and say, "We do not know" (cf. Mat. 21:27). Still others are attracted to Eastern religious ideas that teach that souls may be reincarnated repeatedly as they journey toward the final release of the soul into "oneness." Christianity stands in bold contrast to all these human ideas as it proclaims that all who have ever lived will one day rise and meet God in judgment (John 5:28-29; Heb. 9:27-28). According to the Bible, everyone will be somewhere forever. It is no coincidence, then, to find the Bible character Job asking a great question in the midst of intense personal suffering: "If a man dies, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14).

Although his question is a great one, it is first important to understand what Job was thinking in the context of Job 14:14. Suffering greatly, Job realized that he could not flee his pain. The only place he could think to escape his suffering was the grave. Interestingly and instructively, Job never contemplated suicide; if death was to be his longed-for release, Job still left the time and place of his death in the hands of God (cf. Job 14:5-6). Job wistfully remarked that a tree can be cut down and die, but that, "At the scent of water it will bud"

(Job 14:7-9). He mused that such a fate would be good for him: he could die like a tree that had been cut down and then “sprout” again whenever God’s wrath had subsided and He decided to call Job forth (Job 14:13; Job 14:15). Just imagine if God had granted Job’s wish and killed him, only to resurrect him in a time when Job would again be comfortable, whether in this life or the next. The world would have been robbed of Job’s tremendous example of faith and patience (Jam. 5:11). One of the immediate lessons gleaned from this passage is the reminder that God can bring about great good if we will simply trust His grace to sustain us all the way through times of trial (cf. 2 Cor. 12:7-10; Rom. 8:28-29). So it is in the context of a desire to die and “wait out” his time of suffering that Job asked, “If a man dies, shall he live again” (Job 14:14)?

Job’s question is thought-provoking not just in its original context, but also in the larger framework of Bible teaching on the resurrection of the dead. The Bible promises that not just our souls, but our physical bodies will live again one day (1 Cor. 15:35-57). God has always intended for people to consider the fact that this world is not our home, and so Job’s question is worthy of serious study with respect to the entirety of Scripture.

Resurrection in the Old Testament

Bible students recognize that God’s inspired word was revealed progressively over a period of about 1,600 years. Further, we recognize that the New Testament has a great deal more to say about the resurrection of the dead than does the Old Testament. However, Scripture is very clear that God held men under the Old Covenant responsible for believing in the **fact** of a resurrection of the dead, even if they were not privy to every detail.

Consider the challenge the Sadducees posed to Jesus in Mark 12. These first-century Jews were enamored with Greek philosophy, and they attempted to justify that philosophy with Old Testament Scriptures. Since the ancient Greeks did not believe in the possibility of a resurrection, the Sadducees likewise had adopted the view that there was no resurrection of the dead, and neither were there

angels or spirits (Acts 23:8). Searching for Scriptures to “support” their preconceived ideas, the Sadducees had developed what they thought was an airtight argument against the reality of resurrection: if a woman could be married and widowed seven times, whose wife would she be when the dead were raised (Mark 12:18-23; cf. Deu. 25:5-10)? The Sadducees smugly reasoned that Jesus would either have to admit to polyandry in the afterlife or deny the resurrection.

In response, Jesus began by first accusing the Sadducees of knowing neither the Scriptures nor the power of God (Mark 12:24). He said that marriage will not exist in the resurrection but rather that people will be like the angels who do not marry (Mark 12:25). Next, the Lord declared that evidence for the resurrection of the dead is found in God’s use of the present tense in Exodus 3:6: “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Mark 12:26-27). Notice carefully that Jesus held the Sadducees accountable for understanding from just **one** Old Testament passage that the dead would be raised. He called them “greatly mistaken” for not arriving at the proper conclusion (Mark 12:27).

Had He chosen to do so, Jesus could have pointed out several more Old Testament references to the resurrection. Genesis 5:24 hints at life after death: “Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.” Psalm 17:15 is clearer: “As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.” Isaiah wrote, “Your dead shall live; together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; for your dew is like the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead” (Isa. 26:19). The Lord could have pointed to the words of Daniel: “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan. 12:2), or He could have quoted Hosea, as Paul later did: “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction!” (Hos. 13:14; cf. 1 Cor. 15:54-55). By denying the resurrection of the dead, the Sadducees were clearly guilty of twisting the Old Testament Scriptures to their own destruction (cf. 2 Pet. 3:16).

What did Job understand concerning the resurrection of the dead? Although he likely lived in a time before most of the Old Testament was written, Job obviously had at least some understanding of subjects like God's nature and power, sin, faith, the necessity of sacrifice to make atonement, and God's moral standards (Job 1:1-5; Job 31:1-40). The book of Job itself does not deal extensively with the subject of the afterlife; such is not its primary purpose. However, it is safe to say that Job confidently believed that God had the power to raise the dead (Job 14:14-16). Further, it was his fervent hope and expectation that he would see God again after he had died (Job 19:25-26). Whatever details God had revealed to Job about the afterlife, Job's character demonstrates that he trusted those details implicitly and completely. What an example for modern people of faith.

Resurrection and Jesus Christ

In Jesus Christ the answer to Job's question is seen in its fullness and glory, for Jesus "has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10). While Job believed God could raise the dead, centuries later Martha was blessed to live in a time where she could unreservedly declare concerning Lazarus, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day" (John 11:24).

Jesus spoke almost constantly about resurrection. He taught that one day all who are in the graves will hear His voice and rise again (John 5:28-29). He taught that He Himself would rise the third day after His crucifixion (Luke 9:22). He called Himself "the resurrection and the life," adding that, "He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live, and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die" (John 11:25-26). He said that those who do not believe in the resurrection are greatly mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God (Mat. 22:29). He taught His disciples not to fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul, "But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mat. 10:28). He taught parables about being prepared and properly investing for the day of His return (Mat. 25:1-30). He asked poignant questions about

the folly of gaining the whole world while failing to consider where one will spend eternity (Mark 8:36; Luke 12:20-21). The message of Jesus is unmistakable: everyone will be somewhere forever.

Despite His frequent teaching about resurrection, those who knew Jesus were slow to believe His words and power. When Jesus told mourners that Jairus' daughter was not dead, but sleeping, the King James Version says, "They laughed Him to scorn" (Mark 5:39-40). Neither the apostles nor Mary and Martha appear to have seriously entertained the idea that Jesus would raise Lazarus, even though Martha affirmed that she believed in the resurrection at the last day (John 11:17-45). Later, when the Lord Himself had risen from the dead, even His own disciples were reluctant to believe the reports of witnesses, despite the fact that Jesus had previously spoken of His resurrection on several occasions (Mark 16:11; Mark 16:13). Jesus "appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart" (Mark 16:14). He taught His disciples from the Old Testament Scriptures that "it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day" (Luke 24:46). Because of this slowness to believe in the resurrection, Luke writes that Jesus, "presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs" (Acts 1:3). Thank God for giving the world the evidence it needs to know for certain that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a historical reality.

It is impossible to overstate the significance of Christ's resurrection for New Testament Christianity. Nearly every major doctrine in the New Testament is somehow attached to the fact that He arose. Consider several of the implications connected to His resurrection.

His resurrection declares Him to be the Son of God

Something significant took place in the eyes of God at the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, for it was at this point that Jesus finally accomplished what God had sent Him to do: "It is finished" (John 19:30). The words of Paul at the beginning of Romans teach that Jesus Christ was "declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead"

(Rom. 1:4). But what does this mean? To be sure, there are many references to Jesus as the Son of God prior to His resurrection. John the Baptizer and Nathaniel (among many others) called Him “Son of God” (John 1:34; John 1:49). On two occasions prior to the cross God Himself called Jesus “My Son” (Mat. 3:17; Mat. 17:5). Jesus Himself taught that He was the Son of God (John 5:25; John 9:35). So why does Romans 1:4 say that Jesus Christ was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection of the dead? It simply indicates that His resurrection was the point at which He was exalted by God as the One who had finished His divine plan for man’s redemption. Peter preached that the exaltation of Jesus to the right hand of God occurred **after** His resurrection (Acts 2:32-33). By raising Jesus from the dead, God was manifesting to all that Jesus Christ sits enthroned as the Son of God who rules the nations with all authority (Psa. 2:7-9; Psa. 110:1-4; Mat. 28:18; Phil. 2:6-11; 1 Cor. 15:25-26).

His resurrection guarantees that the general resurrection will one day happen

The resurrection of all those who have died at the end of time is certified by the resurrection of Jesus. Paul calls Jesus “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor. 15:20). The “firstfruits” of a harvest were the first crops harvested in a given season. Paul argued that the resurrection of Jesus was merely the first of many resurrections, the rest of which will take place at the end of time (1 Cor. 15:21-24). The Lord Jesus is referred to elsewhere as “the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence” (Col. 1:18). Paul wrote, “He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you” (2 Cor. 4:14). Again, “God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power” (1 Cor. 6:14). In his sermon at Athens, Paul said that God has appointed a day when He will judge the world in righteousness, and that God has given assurance of this to all by raising Jesus Christ from the dead (Acts 17:30-31). Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we have the promise that all the dead will one day hear His voice and rise from their graves (cf. John 5:28-29).

His resurrection empowers the Gospel

The Bible makes it plain in 1 Corinthians 15 that without the resurrection of Jesus, the Gospel is powerless. Paul argued that “if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty” (1 Cor. 15:14). Notice carefully that profitable preaching and genuine faith both have the same object: Jesus Christ crucified and raised from the dead (1 Cor. 2:2; 1 Cor. 15:4). The resurrection of Jesus makes preaching powerful and causes faith to be the victory that overcomes the world (Rom. 1:16; 1 John 5:4). Further, Paul argued that all our sins remain unforgiven if Christ did not rise from the dead: “If Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!” (1 Cor. 15:17). In connection with this, it is also important to observe the special relationship between the resurrection of Jesus and baptism for the remission of one’s sins: “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4). Without a resurrected Lord, baptism cannot save: “There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 3:21). The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is of such vital importance that without it, no one can be saved.

Resurrection and the Christian Life

In the early days of the New Testament church, the resurrection of the dead was preached as an essential matter of faith. The resurrection and subsequent exaltation of Jesus was the driving thrust of the first Gospel sermon in Acts 2:22-36. The Jewish authorities were “greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead” (Acts 4:2). It was with great power that “the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 4:33). Paul was first summoned to speak at the Areopagus in Athens “because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection” (Acts 17:18). Paul did not hide the doctrine of Christ’s resurrection from Greek philosophers whom he knew would be

skeptical about it (Acts 17:31-32), and Luke writes that “when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, ‘We will hear you again on this matter’” (Acts 17:32). Years later, Paul told Felix, “I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust” (Acts 24:15). The message of Christ and the early church was this: because Jesus lives forever, all of us are going to live somewhere forever.

Early Christians were sometimes influenced by worldly ideas concerning life after death. Some Christians in the Greek city of Corinth were teaching that there was no resurrection of the dead (1 Cor. 15:12). Later, Hymanaeus and Philetus were said to be guilty of overthrowing people’s faith by teaching that the resurrection was already past (2 Tim. 2:17-18). The church at Thessalonica was in despair because some believed that there was no future hope for Christians who had died (1 The. 4:13-18). It is important to note that in each situation where some error concerning the resurrection of the dead was embraced or taught, the apostles met that error with swift and clear teaching to the contrary.

Present-day Christians must, like our ancient brethren, preach the future resurrection of the dead as an essential matter of faith. God uses the truth that the dead will rise again to instruct, warn, and motivate His people. Consider some of the ways in which the resurrection of the dead is presented in the New Testament.

A rebuke to secular thinking

To be secular means that a person judges all of life and life’s experiences by what seems good at this present time: a “right now” mentality. The ancient Greeks are the forerunners of modern-day secular humanism: they denied that man will live on after death. Paul quoted the thinking of many Greek philosophers in 1 Corinthians 15:32: “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!” Secular thinking gives little or no serious thought to what comes after death. By contrast, the message of Jesus to the world was that we are all thinking too much in the short-term. He asked, “What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?” (Mark 8:36). God

called a rich man who failed to consider eternity in his plans a “fool” (Luke 12:20). The fact that everyone will be raised to live somewhere forever rebukes a secular outlook on life.

Perhaps the clearest passage dealing with this point in terms of the resurrection is Colossians 3:1-4,

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Christians are to reject the philosophies of this world and set their minds on eternal things. The basis for this exhortation is not only the commitment we made when we became Christians, “for you died,” but also the future hope of appearing with Christ, “in glory,” a clear reference to the resurrection of the dead at the end of time. How foolish we are when we fail to consider that our choices matter in eternity!

A challenge to trust God more

Just as many of the details concerning the work and resurrection of Jesus Christ must have been a mystery to Job, it remains the case that many of the details concerning the future resurrection are yet a mystery to Christians today. While Christians are to confidently believe in the **fact** of the resurrection, many of the details about which we are curious have not been revealed. For example, in 1 Corinthians 15 Paul dealt with the question, “How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?” (1 Cor. 15:35). The best he could do to describe our resurrection bodies was to say that in some ways they will be the same as our present bodies, while at the same time different. He said it will be like the difference in the flesh of men and of animals (1 Cor. 15:39). He further said it will be like the difference between the glory of the sun, the glory

of the moon, and the glory of the stars (1 Cor. 15:41). Our resurrection bodies are said to be incorruptible, powerful, and spiritual as opposed to our present corruptible, weak, and natural bodies (1 Cor. 15:42-49).

John describes our future condition this way: “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). Other than what is written in 1 Corinthians 15, the mystery of what our resurrection bodies will really be like has yet to be revealed; like Job, we must trust what God has revealed to us and leave the hidden details to Him (Deu. 29:29). The idea of a resurrection of the dead was far-fetched for the men at the Areopagus, and it seems far-fetched to many today. However, God has shown Himself trustworthy by keeping every promise He has ever made (Tit. 1:2). As a result, we are able to place full trust and confidence in His promises regarding the resurrection of the dead.

A comfort in times of suffering

It is altogether natural that in the midst of intense suffering Job would spend time thinking about what comes after death (Job 14:14). Paul was thinking in a similar way in Romans 8:18: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” The context surrounding this passage indicates that “glory revealed” has to do with the resurrection and glorification of our bodies when Jesus returns: “Eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:23). So Paul is arguing that no matter how difficult or prolonged our suffering becomes, it pales in comparison to the greatness and joy associated with a resurrected life with Jesus. The Scriptures say something similar in 2 Corinthians 4. Paul writes about the resurrection of the dead in verse 14, and then makes an application: “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17). Again, in the midst of suffering God’s Word often points people to the hope of resurrection.

Of significance also is that Paul comforted the Christians at Thessalonica with the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. As has been noted already, some of these Christians despaired because they believed the hope of those who had died in Christ had been cut off (cf. 1 The. 4:13). To the contrary, Paul argues that not only will Jesus bring the souls of those who have died with Him when He returns (1 The. 4:14), but that those souls will re-enter their bodies and “the dead in Christ will rise first” (1 The. 4:16). He states that we who remain alive at His coming will be “caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 The. 4:17). This teaching is intended to comfort Christians (1 The. 4:18), for we do not sorrow as do those who have no hope. One of the great joys to anticipate regarding the resurrection is the fact that we will be able to once again see and enjoy the company of the righteous dead. Paul asked, “What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?” (1 The. 2:19).

An encouragement in times of weariness or despair

At the conclusion of his great chapter on the resurrection of the dead in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul exhorts: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58). The reality of a resurrection gives the Christian life real meaning! **Without** the resurrection of the dead, Christianity is empty, vain, and the most miserable lifestyle imaginable (1 Cor. 15:19). **With** the promise of resurrection, Christianity is vibrant, substantial, and the most worthwhile of endeavors. The words of Galatians 6 challenge Christians to sow to the Spirit in order to “reap everlasting life” (Gal. 6:8). In times of weariness and discouragement, God says, “Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart” (Gal. 6:9).

One of the great encouraging thoughts related to the resurrection of the dead is that on the Day of Judgment, we will be able to see more of the influence we have had in others’ lives than we are presently able to observe. Paul wanted the Corinthians to remain

faithful so that his work with them would not prove to have been a waste: “Each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is” (1 Cor. 3:13). Paul longed for people he had taught to remain faithful so that God would be glorified and Paul would be able to rejoice in what the Gospel had accomplished. In times of discouragement, how encouraging it is to remember that resurrection day is coming, and that every endeavor in the cause of Christ is therefore profitable.

A reminder to invest wisely

Our time, energy, relationships, and resources are all blessings given by God Himself, and He expects us to invest them wisely. This is precisely the point of the Lord’s parable about the talents in Matthew 25:14-30. Jesus wanted His disciples to remember that He is going to return one day and demand an accounting for how we have invested the blessings He has provided. The wise servants invested wisely and were rewarded for their faithfulness (Mat. 25:20-23), but the wicked and lazy servant did not invest at all and was punished (Mat. 25:24-30). The Lord’s point in all of this is to cause us to consider the outcome of our stewardship with a view to the fact that we will live somewhere forever. In another place Jesus said, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal” (Mat. 6:19-20). Resurrection day is coming, and on that day many will regret the fact that they have spent time investing in this world but not in the next.

Conclusion

Job asked, “If a man dies, shall he live again?” It is a question of the ages, and yet it is still immensely relevant to our lives here and now. Let us be careful how we answer, for eternity itself hangs in the balance.

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CHAPTER 11

Gird Up Now Thy Loins Like A Man

Steve Higginbotham

“**T**hen the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said: ‘Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me’ (New King James Version, Job 38:1-3).

The title of this lesson comes from the King James Version rendering of Job 38:3. In this passage, the King James translators employed a more formal equivalence by translating the phrase, “Gird up now, thy loins like a man.”

The expression, “Gird up now, thy loins like a man” is quite uncommon in our language today. Probably very few of us have ever used that expression, and it may not communicate to the average person today. Therefore, an explanation is in order.

In Bible times, it was common for men to wear a loose-fitting, long robe called a tunic. Around the waist, men would also wear a “girdle,” or a wide belt that helped to keep the tunic from being so loose that it would interfere with walking and other daily activities. Therefore, when men traveled, worked in the fields, or prepared for battle, they had to tighten or gird their robes about their loins. Otherwise, their loose-fitting garments would interfere with their freedom of motion. Men would “gird their loins” by grabbing the rear hem of their tunic, pulling it forward through one’s legs, and then tucking it into their girdle or belt. This would basically turn the tunic into “baggy shorts.”

Thus the expression to *gird up the loins* had a quite literal application. However, it idiomatically came to denote the concept of

“preparedness.” This of course, is the sense in which it was used in Job 38:3. God was telling Job to prepare himself like a man.

In this lesson, we will use this command of God, “Gird up your loins,” as a backdrop as we examine several ways in which men need to “gird up their loins” or “prepare themselves” today.

Gird Up Your Loins In The Home

Men need to “gird up their loins” with reference to their leadership in the home. The home in America is struggling. Much of that struggle is due to the abdication of the Father’s role as spiritual leader in the home. Men functioning as a father or a husband need to “prepare themselves” and lead their wives and children by example.

From what I have observed, homes need fathers/husbands to practice and teach the grace of forgiveness. One of the fundamental differences between a follower of Jesus and one who is not is the willingness to forgive. We who have been forgiven so much need to impress upon our families the need to practice forgiveness.

Jesus said, “Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, ‘Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe!’ So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and

begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses." (Mat. 18:23-35)

In this passage, our need for forgiveness is taught as well as our need to extend forgiveness to others. One who holds a grudge, who harbors ill will toward another, and who refuses to offer forgiveness, no matter how religious they may appear, will not go to Heaven. Thus men need to impress this truth upon their families.

A few years ago, I received a telephone call from my 10 year old son. He said in a very quiet, solemn voice, "Daddy, I was going to mow the yard and I accidentally poured the gasoline where the oil is supposed to go and now the mower won't start."

Well, my first thought was money. That mower was nearly \$200.00! So I made sure he understood just how expensive a mistake he had made. I lectured him about his carelessness and then I hung up.

However, after hanging up the phone, I sat at my desk and rehearsed my words in my mind. They were harsh and were not very understanding. Then suddenly my mind went back to an incident from my own childhood that had not crossed my mind for years. I recalled an occasion when I poured the wrong type of gasoline in my

dad's new Lawnboy lawnmower, and I ruined it. How could I be so hard on my son when I had done the same thing?

I was convicted. So I immediately left work and drove home to talk to my son. When I arrived at home, he was sitting in the chair with a sullen look, not wanting to even make eye-contact with me. I said, "Matthew, do you want to know what happened to me when I was about your age?" Without looking up at me, he managed to quietly mumble the word "What?" I said, "I was going to mow the lawn for granddad and I poured the wrong type of gasoline in granddad's new lawnmower and ruined it." Immediately, a smile broke out across his face. Nothing more needed to be said, but I added one more comment. I said, "You know Matthew, you are a lot like your dad." With that statement, his face just lit up. He then looked me in the eyes, though he could not before, and he understood that he had been forgiven.

It is a great feeling to be forgiven and to forgive. I hope that lesson in forgiveness stays with my son. I hope he will someday pass it on to his son as my father passed it on to me and I to my son.

Men also need to "gird up their loins" and teach the value of sacrifice in their homes. We live in a self-indulgent society. We possess all that we need and almost all that we want. There is a spirit of entitlement that I believe is unhealthy and un-Christlike in many American homes today. Our children know very little of what it means to sacrifice, and this stands in stark contrast to how Jesus lived and how He has asked us to live.

Think about this. Jesus is the only person to come into this world having the choice of when He would come, to whom He would come, and where He would come. However, one cannot help but be amazed by the choices that He made with respect to His entry into the world. He came in the first century, a time in which there was no running water in homes, no plumbing, no electricity, no air-conditioning, and no electronics. He also came into this world to common parents. His father was not a nobleman, but only a carpenter. Why would the King of kings and Lord of lords choose this as His entry point into the world? Why would He have not chosen to have been

born into nobility? Why would he have not chosen a more convenient time to live than the first century? Why would he have not chosen a better country in which to live? The answer is because it was not about him. Jesus came to serve others and give Himself as a sacrifice (Mat. 20:28).

Although he was a King, it was not about him. His life and His death were all about pleasing the Father and serving humanity. Paul said, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might become rich” (2 Cor. 8:9).

When I was just a young boy, I remember an occasion when my mother was having a rather difficult day in the kitchen. She had gotten distracted by several matters and ended up burning some of the meat we were planning to eat for Supper. She was upset because now we did not have enough meat to go around. That is when my dad quietly called me into his bedroom and had the following conversation with me. He said, “Son, your Mother has accidentally burned the meat and now we do not have enough to go around between all of us. So I am going to ask you to step up and act like a man in the family. When the plate of meat is passed to you, just pass it on and let your mother and sister have it. That is what a man would do in such a situation.”

Enough said! I had been invited to join the ranks of “manhood” by my father. That evening, when my mother called us to the dinner table, I could hardly wait to decline my helping of meat so that my sister and mother could have it. I must say, I never felt more like a man in my life! I was proud! And my dad taught me a lesson about sacrifice that lingers with me more than 40 years later.

That is just one small example of a grand principle that our families need to learn. One will never be more like Jesus than when he is sacrificing for others. Men, by your words and your deeds, teach your children to sacrifice. Let them experience the joy that can come from giving rather than receiving (Acts 20:35).

Men also need to “gird up their loins” and teach their children the Word of God. It is sad to consider that many children will reach adulthood and have no memories of their father praying at the

dinner table and no memories of their father ever reading to them from the Bible or telling them a Bible story. Men, step up to the task before you! Consider just what it is that is at stake!

During the time following the death of Joshua, God offers for us a commentary on the typical Israelite home. He said, "When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord not the work which he had done for Israel (Jud. 2:10). What a sad commentary that is on the people of that time. Not only did a generation of Israelites not know the Lord, they did not even know the works which he had done for Israel. In fact, the reason they did not know the Lord is because they had never been taught the works that God had done.

Consider what that means. That means that mothers and fathers had not taken the time to teach their children the great stories of God's activity in their history. They did not know the works that God had done for Israel. They did not know the plagues He brought upon Israel to secure their release from Egyptian bondage (Exo. 7-12). They did not know how God led them by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Exo. 13:21). They did not know how God caused the chariot wheels to fall off the chariots of the pursuing Egyptian army, giving the Israelites time to make their escape (Exo. 14:25). They did not know how God parted the Red Sea (Exo. 14:21). They did not know how God had sustained their fathers with manna (Exo. 16), gave them water from a rock (Exo. 17) and would not allow their sandals or clothing to wear out for 40 years (Deu. 29:5)! The list of God's workings among His people could go on and on, and this information was not passed on to the children. It is no wonder then, that there arose a generation who did not have a relationship with God. God was a stranger to them!

The home needs men who will not allow God to be a stranger to their children. The story is told of an elderly, God-fearing lady who lived in England. Her ungodly neighbors did all they could to do harass her for her faith, but she never gave them occasion to speak evil against her. One day, the Queen of England passed through their community, and she actually randomly stopped at this godly woman's

house for tea. You can imagine how excited this godly woman was. For the next few days, she recounted her brush with nobility to all who would listen. However, her excitement about the queen's visit gave opportunity for her wicked neighbors to entrap her. One day her neighbors came to her and said, "Who is the most important person to ever visit your home?" Without batting an eye, she said, "Why, the Queen of England, of course." Her neighbors had sprung their trap. They laughed and said, "Oh, so now you place the Queen of England above the God about which you're always talking?" To which she replied, "Certainly not. You asked me who was the most important person to visit my home. The reason I said, "The Queen of England" and not God is because God does not visit my home; He dwells there."

Men, would your home-life look any different if God took up residence in your home? When David attempted to move the Ark of the Covenant in an unauthorized manner, he became angry with God because of God's discipline against Uzzah (2 Sam. 6:7-8). Thus David gave up on bringing the Ark back to Jerusalem and took it aside into the house of Obed-Edom (2 Sam. 6:10). Consider now what it must have been like for Obed-Edom to have the Ark of the Covenant in his own house. Do you suppose that the visible presence of God in Obed-Edom's home caused any changes to be made in his family's behavior? Surely it did. Surely, they had to be more mindful of God's presence in their home.

While God does not have a physical presence in our homes, He should have a spiritual presence. Our home-life needs to be governed as if God literally dwelled in our homes. That would impact our speech, our entertainment choices, our attitudes, and our time spent talking about and doing spiritual things.

Gird Up Your Loins In The Church

God has always needed men upon whom He could count. In the same way that the home has suffered due to unprepared men, so has the kingdom of God. The Lord said through the prophet Ezekiel, "So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand

in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one” (Eze. 22:30). What a sad commentary this is of the state of men during this time.

God needs men in the church today who will be prepared to step up like the prophet Isaiah and say, “Here am I, send me” (Isa. 6:8). God needs men to say yes.

Many years ago, my father helped me by introducing me to a perspective that I had never before considered. I was apparently grumbling about how many times I was being used in the public worship services. My father then explained that my response to those who were asking me to pass the communion, lead a prayer, clean the communion trays after church, etc. was not really a response to them, but to God. When I said no, please find someone else to do it, I was not saying no to the man who asked for my help, I was saying no to an opportunity to serve God. Ever since that conversation with my father, I have never said no to a request to help in worship. You see, I do not ever want to say no to God. Furthermore, I want and my children need to see me saying yes to the Lord.

The church needs men who are soldiers of Christ. I sometimes wonder if we have forgotten that we are soldiers. Christianity is not a social club; it’s an army (2 Tim. 2:3). Christianity is not about having your desires met; it’s about spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:12). Christianity is not about being served, but serving Christ (Phi. 3:8). Think how great it would be if the church could honestly affirm the following poem written by Cindye Coats:

I am a soldier. I am a soldier in the army of my God. The Lord Jesus Christ is my Commanding Officer. The Holy Bible is my code of conduct. Faith, prayer and the word are my weapons of warfare. I have been taught by the Holy Spirit, trained by experience, tried by adversity, and tested by fire. I am a volunteer in this army and I have enlisted for eternity, I will either retire from this army at the Lord’s return or die in this army;

but I will not get out, sell out, be talked out or pushed out. I am faithful, reliable, and dependable.

If my God needs me, I am there. If He needs me in Sunday School to teach children, work with youth, help with adults or just sit and learn, He can use me, because I am there. If He needs me in church Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday, revival or special services, I am there. I am there to preach, teach, sing, pray, work, or worship. God can use me because I am there. I am a Soldier. I am not a baby. I do not need to be pampered, petted, primed up, pumped up, picked up, or pepped up.

I am a Soldier. No one has to call me, remind me, write me, visit me, entice me, or lure me. I am a Soldier. I am not a wimp. I am in place saluting my King, obeying His orders, praising His name, and serving in His Kingdom. No one has to send me flowers, gifts, food, cards, candy, or give me handouts. I do not need to be cuddled, cradled, cared for, or catered to. I am a Soldier, and I am committed.

I cannot have my feelings hurt badly enough to turn me around. I cannot be discouraged enough to turn me aside. I cannot lose enough to cause me to quit. When Jesus called me into this army, I had nothing. And, if I ended up with nothing, I will still break even. I am a Soldier, I am committed, I will win. My God will supply all my needs. I am more than a conqueror, I will always triumph. I can do all things through Christ. Devils cannot defeat me. People cannot disillusion me.

Weather cannot weary me. Sickness cannot stop me. Battles cannot beat me. Money cannot buy me. Governments cannot silence me, and Hell cannot handle me. I am a soldier. I am committed. Even death cannot destroy me.

I am a Soldier in the army and I am marching, claiming victory. I will not give up, I will not turn around. I am a Soldier marching Heaven bound. I am a Soldier. Will you stand with me? If God is in it, you can do it.

Men, “gird up your loins” and be a good soldier for Christ and endure any hardship that may come your way as a result (2 Tim. 2:3).

The church also needs men who will gird up their loins and serve God for nothing. Do you remember how the book of Job begins with God telling the Devil what a good man Job was (Job 1:8)? Do you remember what the Devil said in response? To summarize his words, the Devil said that the only reason Job was serving God was because God was good to him, had built a “hedge” around him so that nothing bad could touch him. Then the Devil asked the question, “Does Job fear God for nothing” (Job 1:9)? In other words, if God would allow bad things to happen to Job; if his family, his wealth, and his livelihood were taken from him, would he still serve God? The Devil was convinced that he would not, but God knew Job better than the Devil knew Job. And of course, God was right, for after Job had lost everything, including his own health, Job said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.” In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong” (Job 1:21-22).

The church desperately needs men who have the resolve to “serve God for nothing.” The church needs men who will not get their feelings hurt and quit. The church needs men who will not get discouraged and walk away. The church needs men who will

not get burned out and resign. The church needs men who will not pout and withhold their talents when they do not get their way. The church needs men who will serve regardless. It needs men who will serve when they are overlooked, criticized, misrepresented, and unappreciated. The church needs men who will not allow the actions of others or the circumstances around them to dissuade them from serving God. The church needs men who will serve God for nothing! Men, “gird up your loins” and serve God for nothing!

I cannot imagine having God tell me, as He did Job, “Gird up your loins like a man.” What an intimidating command! But men, take note that although we have not heard the voice of God as did Job, God is calling us to “gird up our loins” or “prepare ourselves” for service in the home and in the kingdom of God, the church. May we be vigilant, ever ready, and prepared to serve God in whatever capacity He needs us.

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CHAPTER 12

Longing For Death: Biblical Answers To End-Of-Life Decisions

Brad Harrub

Her eyes no longer see clearly—rather it is as though she is constantly looking out of dirty windows. The reflection she sees in the mirror is foreign to her, and she wonders just who that aged woman is who is staring back at her. She cannot remember a day in the past few years that her joints did not ache. Sleep does not come as easily anymore, and she frequently finds herself waking early in the morning, walking around the house, and then napping throughout the day. Her memory is not nearly as sharp as it once was, and she is finding more and more comfort in the familiar surroundings of her own home. No one brags of her homemade pies anymore, as her hands will no longer cooperate to roll out the crust and mix together the ingredients. While she would like to attend worship services regularly, she is no longer able to drive herself, and she lives with a constant fear of falling and breaking her hip—a very real fear given the way young children now run around church buildings. She knows she is in the winter of life, and yet the real sadness comes from her own family members. On several different occasions this woman has cried herself to sleep after overhearing whispered conversations of her children who are wanting to put her in a nursing home. This woman realizes that in the final chapter of her life she has become the one thing she dreaded most—a burden to her family.

Solomon declared there is a time to be born and a time to die (New King James Version, Ecc. 3:2). The writer of Hebrews observed, “It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,” (Heb. 9:27). While we know death is a reality, deep down most people think they will somehow beat the system. We put off thinking about it and always assume that it will be others who are touched by death, rather than we ourselves. There are two very real problems associated with death and aging that are affecting the very heart of Christianity: our fear and contempt of death; and the concept that the aged and infirmed are burdens.

There has been an ever-so-slight shift in our culture that has gone almost undetected. The citizens of the United States have followed in the footsteps of the Greeks who worshipped youth. They placed a high value on youthful appearance. Likewise, young adults today do what they can to appear youthful. They do not like the constant reminder that they, too, will one day show distinct signs of aging and will not be as nimble. Having elderly parents around served as a persistent notice that the wrinkles and gray hair were just around the corner.

As the pace of life quickened, the question quietly arose about what to do with the elderly. In their ongoing pursuit of material things, young adults slowly began to view their elderly parents and grandparents as hinderances to a better life. Two income families meant that no one was home to help care for aging parents. In centuries past, parents would be moved in with one of their children in their twilight years. Homes today feature massive closets with built-ins for clothes and shoes—bigger than bedrooms of the past. However, these new homes rarely take into consideration a place for aging parents who can no longer live on their own. Add to this that most home-owners’ associations are fervently against any new addition that does not fit their cookie-cutter neighborhood pattern. And so the decision was made—whether conscious or not—to ship the elderly off to nursing homes.

What once would have never even been considered is the norm today. The general pattern is “out of sight and out of mind.”

Granted, there are many cases in which a family cannot physically care for their disabled parent or grandparent, but nursing homes have become the standard even for those who are not disabled. Rare is the family who is caring for their aged parents or grandparents. Rather than honoring and loving our aging family members, we have caused them to perceive that they are a burden to family, friends, and caregivers. As a massive influx of “Baby Boomers” enter the winter season of life, more and more questions are arising about end-of-life decisions and the quality of life.

Humans no longer view life the way God intended. We have forgotten that we are the “offspring of God” as Paul told the crowd gathered at the Areopagus (Acts 17:28). Consider for a moment the old lady mentioned above. How would her life be different if her children viewed her the way God views her? How different would her life be if her children comprehended that God desires we honor and care for the elderly rather than casting them off? The inspired Word of God records: “You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the Lord” (Lev. 19:32). The inspired Psalmist observed “Do not cast me off in the time of old age; Do not forsake me when my strength fails” (Psa. 71:9).

First Timothy 5 is often quoted in regard to men who would not work to provide for their own family. However, in context the passage is actually talking about caring for our parents.

Honor widows who are really widows. But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God. Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day. But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives. And these things command, that they may be blameless. But if anyone does not provide for his

own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. (1 Tim. 5:3-8)

What stronger words could Paul use to rebuke someone who is neglecting his or her aged parent?

Just because someone is sick, aged, or disabled does not change the very real fact that they possess a soul that is precious to God. If we are going to ever break the cycle of neglecting the sick and elderly, we are going to have to first demonstrate to those who are sick, infirmed, or aged that they are not a burden—rather they are loved and honored, as God commands.

End-Of-Life Ethics: Not an Emotional Issue

When it comes to end-of-life decisions, we must ask ourselves where do we get our standard for ethics. As humans, we are inclined to place a large emphasis upon our feelings, emotions, and our own beliefs. Yes, we claim to believe in God, but how often do we actually turn to Him and His Word for answers about what to do in end-of-life decisions? More often than not, we “go with our gut” and allow our emotions to rule when it comes to making these important decisions.

Make no doubt about it: there is an absolute right and wrong. There is a moral code that all humans should live by. In every ethical situation we face, there are standards that should be heeded. And yet, when it comes to end-of-life decisions, we humans often make our decisions based on our emotions.

What is the problem if God is not man’s standard for ethics? What is the problem with allowing mankind to discern what is right and what is wrong? Ask yourself who would ultimately get to decide? Is it the person holding political power (e.g., Might is Right) or the majority of people? Or is it the group with the strongest lobby in Washington? While this may sound okay to some, consider the problems that quickly arise. For instance, this view of ethics fails to note the difference between power and goodness. Men like Stalin,

Nero, and Hitler all ascended to a position of power—but would we consider their decisions “good”? Another ethical view is that man is the measure of all things. Greek philosopher Protagoras actually was the man who came up with this particular opposing view. His concept was that each individual’s own will is the standard for what is right and wrong. What is the problem with man being the measure of all things? Simply put, it would imply that some acts are right, even if it’s cruel or hateful to others. Ultimately, it would destroy the community. Another opposing view might be that right is moderation. Aristotle believed that morality was found basically in moderation. Therefore, people were to take a moderate course of action. You know, as long as you did everything in moderation, it was considered to be okay. While moderation is good, is it really a measure of morality? Whose definition of moderation are we going to use?

While emotionally we may not want to concede it, the only option that is logical is that true ethics—an absolute standard for right and wrong—can only be found in God’s unchanging nature. The Bible tells us that God is immutable—unchanging: “For I *am* the Lord, I do not change; Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob” (Mal. 3:6). The inspired psalmist declared, “Righteousness and justice *are* the foundation of Your throne” (Psa. 89:14). It is upon that foundation that we find a true standard for right and wrong.

Our postmodern culture does not accept the truth of absolute right and wrong. This does not change the fact that true morality and ethics exist—and are based on God’s unchanging nature. Thus, this examination of end-of-life decisions will be based not on emotions or what our parents or grandparents think—but rather on God’s view of life and morals. If you hold that the Bible is inspired, then it must be to that source that you turn for answers regarding end-of-life decisions.

Life—a Gift Not a Right

As humans we like our “rights.” In America we have been indoctrinated to look at everything through the lens of “what is our

right”? In fact, we stand very proudly behind our rights as citizens. However, what happens when the concept of our rights moves into the realm of end-of-life decisions? What happens when our rights even move to the very last decision that we will make: how we will die? In the opening chapter of Job, we find a man whose character is attacked, his flocks and property are taken away, and his children are tragically killed. If this were not bad enough, Job’s body is then struck with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head (Job 2:7). In chapter 3 we find Job deploring his birth asking “Why did I not die at birth? Why did I not perish when I came from the womb?” (Job 3:11). A few verses later, Job asks: “Why is light given to him who is in misery, and life to the bitter of soul, Who long for death but it does not come, And search for it more than hidden treasures” (Job 3:20-21). This was a man who wanted to die—but he also wanted to remain upright in the sight of the Lord.

Most Christians are vehemently opposed to “pro-choice” when it comes to the abortion movement. The Bible is clear that God views life to begin before birth (see Jer. 1:5; Isa. 49:1; Isa. 49:5; Psa. 139:13-14; Job 3:13-16). But what about when it comes to the end-of-life? Do we still uphold the sanctity of human life? Just because a life has aged, does that make it less worthy of being protected? The Bible is clear that Jesus Christ, not man, holds the keys to death. In John’s revelation he wrote: “I *am* He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death” (Rev. 1:18).

In the January 19, 2012 issue of the *Journal of Medical Ethics*, there was an article titled “What Makes Killing Wrong.” The authors contended, “This account implies that it is not even pro tanto morally wrong to kill patients who are universally and irreversibly disabled, because they have no abilities to lose.” They conclude their article by stating:

We will close with one application to show that our approach makes a difference to medical practice. Traditional medical ethics embraces

the norm that doctors (and other healthcare professionals) must not kill their patients. This norm is often seen as absolute and universal. In contrast, we have argued that killing by itself is not morally wrong, although it is still morally wrong to cause total disability. (Sinnott-Armstrong and Miller)

The very next month, this same journal featured an article titled “After Birth Abortions: Why Should the Baby Live?” (see Giubilini and Minerva). The authors were arguing that people should be able to kill a recently born newborn for all of the same reasons one would abort an unborn child. The authors stated, “Merely being a human is not in itself a reason for ascribing someone a right to life.” The authors continued:

The alleged right of individuals (such as fetuses and newborns) to develop their potentiality, which someone defends, is over-ridden by the interests of actual people (parents, family, society) to pursue their own well-being because, as we have just argued, merely potential people cannot be harmed by not being brought into existence. Actual people’s well-being could be threatened by the new (even if healthy) child requiring energy, money, and care which the family might be in short supply of (Giubilini and Minerva).

These medical articles are a good indication of what happens when we come to view humans as being a product of evolution rather than being created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26-27). Human life is not a choice. It is a beautiful gift from God. If we are to render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s, should we not also render unto God what is God’s (Mat. 22:21)?

We are all familiar that the Ten Commandments declared, “You shall not murder” (Exo. 20:13). However, the New Testament is replete with similar teachings, even expanding on this theme (see Mat. 5:21, Mat. 15:19, Mark 10:19, Luke 18:20, Rom. 13:9, 1 Tim. 1:9, Jam. 2:11) In the book of Revelation, we are told that murderers “shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone,

which is the second death” (Rev. 21:8). Life is sacred and must be protected—even among the aged and infirmed.

In evaluating God’s creation of man, we find that man—unlike the animals—was created in the image of God. The Bible clearly tells us that God is a spirit (John 4:24). Therefore the part of man created in His image is our spirits. Animals do not possess a soul or spirit. It is the soul that makes man different. God instills a soul in man, a soul that will one day spend eternity somewhere. If God is the giver of life, man does not have the right/choice to take life. Job was a man in misery who wanted to die, but still was able to declare: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21).

End-of-life Decisions

I suspect we all know of somebody who has received “the call,” the call that comes in the middle of the night. It is the call that is a nightmare from the very beginning—the call where we are told that one of our loved ones has been in a tragic car wreck or has had a heart attack or stroke, and we need to come immediately to the hospital. Oftentimes the call comes in the wee hours of the morning and we find ourselves hustling about, trying to get dressed, find our keys, and race to the hospital. All the while we are praying that single prayer over and over in our heads: “Please God, just let them be alive.” And yet, sadly, it is in that critical situation with heightened emotions and probably very little sleep that we have to make very serious decisions. In fact, sometimes we are forced to make quite literally “life or death” decisions for our loved ones.

Most Christians never give thought as to how they should respond in these situations until they are forced to do so. In this study, I aim to address how we should respond to some of these end-of-life decisions in two different areas. We are going to talk about traumatic or sudden injury, as mentioned above. These are situations that require rapid surrogate decisions, often without a moment’s

notice. In addition, we will also discuss decisions needed for less emergent, longer-term care (e.g., someone needing a feeding tube).

This manuscript is not meant to cover every situation, as that would require multiple volumes and far surpass the page limit given to authors. Rather this is to be a general guide or template that Christians can refer to that will help them properly discern what God would have them do in end-of-life decisions. To accomplish this, I want you to walk with me through a couple of definitions/scenarios as we peel back the layers and try to figure out exactly what our response should be in these end-of-life scenarios. It is my prayer that you never have to make these decisions in the wee hours of the morning. In fact, it is my prayer that you never have to make these decisions at all. But I know the reality of the situation is that we will probably lose loved ones who are very precious to us, and some of those losses will require decisions that will be made by family members. As such, I want to open God's Word to ensure that we have logic and Scripture on our side when that day finally arrives. And rather than us making a decision from passion, emotions, or lack of sleep, we make it with a clear, concise, logical, and a very Biblical-based perspective.

Coma.

We have all heard of the word *coma* or somebody being in a coma. The *Stedman's Medical Dictionary* defines coma as a state of profound unconsciousness from which one cannot be aroused. Usually this is a state that would follow something like someone's head hitting a windshield—any kind of a traumatic brain injury. Let us say that you do get that call in the middle of the night and you race to the hospital to find a son or a daughter—or maybe a parent—lying there on a hospital gurney. The doctor walks you out into the waiting area and informs you that your loved one is in a coma. What should be your response? We must first ask ourselves: Is the person still living? If the answer is “yes” (which it would be in the case of coma), then the Bible prescribes two things to you. First, we must pray (and call the elders of the congregation if you have them, Jam. 5:14). This is good for all of the instances we are looking at. We

must learn to turn to Him, the Great Physician. God wants us to pray to Him in good times and in bad (Jam. 5:13). And so if you find yourself in this situation, let me encourage you: turn to God rather than blaming Him. Lean on Him for strength. Second, we should prescribe a strong dose of patience. Anatomically speaking, a coma is basically a brain that is swelling—a bruise of the brain.

Let us go back to that traffic accident for just a moment. There is a good chance your loved one may have hit the windshield or steering wheel at a fairly high rate of speed—not too uncommon these days. The brain itself is a fairly fluid organ. The brain is going to want to keep moving in the direction the car was going. And yet, the skull—the bone that covers the brain—is actually going to stop the brain from going in that direction. When the brain hits the front side of that skull, oftentimes it will result in a swelling of the brain. However, the brain does not have a whole lot of area to swell into. The one direction that the brain can swell is downwards—down towards the spinal cord, through the foramen magnum. This swelling puts pressure on various aspects of the brain, and oftentimes people will lose consciousness. Individuals in this situation may lose certain functions, (e.g., the ability to speak, hear, or move the body). They are in a state of unconsciousness. What do we as faithful Christians need to remember? We need to remember to be patient. Because it is only after that brain swelling goes down that we can realistically see what damage has been done. In other words, it is only after a few days or maybe a few weeks that we can actually identify the true extent of the damage. So as Christians we pray and seek patience.

Persistent Vegetative State

From that coma state, patients normally go in one of three directions. Occasionally, the swelling is too intense and the patient will die (see Brain Death below). Additionally, there will be some patients who regain a portion of their health. These are individuals who come out of a coma—wake up—and regain some of the lost functions. They may have some neurological dysfunctions or suffer some permanent damage, but they are conscious and have normally regained enough function to be rehabilitated in some fashion. The

third direction is when a patient transitions from being in a coma to what we call a persistent vegetative state (PVS). That word *persistent* is somewhat misleading, because it causes some to think that this condition is irreversible, when the reality of it is there have been many people who have come out of a PVS state. One of the things that you need to be aware of in the PVS state is that in order for somebody to be diagnosed, it normally takes months.

The most famous example of PVS in recent times would be Terri Schiavo. Physicians believe Terri had suffered from a heart attack episode at a relatively young age in life. She was revived, but the lack of oxygen to her brain resulted in brain loss. She was transported to the hospital in a coma state. Months later, she transitioned into a PVS. Terri could breathe on her own, not needing a ventilator, but she was eventually left without the ability to swallow food normally and therefore required a feeding tube. I interviewed Terri's brother and was surprised to learn just how "physically" healthy she really was. While she had trouble with some movements and communication and required the feeding tube, the rest of her body was quite healthy. He said in fact, there were times where they would take her out shopping. He said if she were still alive with us today, she could quite literally be sitting on a couch during our interview. Does this sound like someone who is "dead"?

The Bible confirms that every life has value—even those individuals many would consider "vegetative," individuals who allegedly cannot contribute anything to society. In Amos 2:6-7, we begin to discern the specialness of all humans, "Thus says the Lord: 'For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away its *punishment*, Because they sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of sandals. They pant after the dust of the earth *which is* on the head of the poor, and pervert the way of the humble. A man and his father go in to the *same* girl, To defile My holy name.'" Jonah goes on to develop this Biblical concept by observing, "But the Lord said, 'You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one

hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and much livestock?” (Jonah 4:10-11). Simply put, all human life has value to God.

What should we do if we are told that one of our loved ones is in a persistent vegetative state? Because of the diagnosis itself, we need to understand, this situation is not as black and white as say a broken bone, because a PVS is actually a range of brain loss. There may be some people who have very little brain damage but are still unresponsive. We would expect that maybe after a few months or years that they are going to come out of this state and be able to function. Then again, there are individuals who have extensive brain damage, maybe even missing an entire lobe or different parts of their cortex. However, there is one critical point we must always remember: Somebody in a persistent vegetative state **is still very much alive**. By this I mean they are still showing active brain waves, and their respiratory centers are still functioning. These patients may need assistance with a ventilator, but oftentimes they do not. If you hook these individuals up to an EEG machine to record their brain waves, what you are not going to see is a flat line, but rather, you are going to see electrical activity because they are very much alive.

Some would argue that these people are not really living. They are simply vegetables. However, we must realize they still have a soul precious to God, and they are still able to affect and impact others. Can we honestly say that Terri Schiavo did not teach our culture some valuable lessons—even though she never spoke a word? Just because someone is disabled or infirmed does not mean they cannot make a difference in the lives of others.

Have individuals come out of persistent vegetative states? Absolutely! Gary Dockery was in a persistent vegetative state for 7½ years and came out and was able to talk to his loved ones. There are several cases of individuals who were in PVS for more than 5 years who eventually recovered. Many of these individuals have distinct memories of events or conversations while they were in PVS. So what should be our prescription for somebody in a persistent vegetative

state? Again, we start out with the prayers and the patience, but this time we should add to it that as Christians, we must remember that person is alive. And being such, we do not have the right to terminate the life of someone who is alive.

Brain Death

Let us go back to our scenario for just a moment. You get the call in the middle of the night, and after showing up to the hospital you learn that it is the worst of all possible scenarios. The doctor explains to you that your loved one has suffered brain death—that clinically speaking he or she is dead. Brain death, sometimes called “whole brain death,” occurs when the entire brain, including the brain stem and the respiratory centers are irreversibly damaged. Brain death equals true death in which the spirit has left the body (Jam. 2:26). Unlike the heart that can be shocked back into a rhythm after it stops beating, once the brain dies the patient is dead.

So what happens to those facing this tragic situation? You walk into that hospital room after being told the tragic news, and what you see is your loved one, but it appears he is breathing. You can hear the whoosh of air. Maybe you hear the mechanical sounds of that ventilator. There may still be some tubes hooked up, various IVs still in place, and various machines quietly humming nearby. As you look at everything in the room, it might appear that your loved one is still there. What you are actually observing is a body that is still being pumped with oxygenated blood in hopes that you will consider organ donation after you get over the initial shock of his death. So doctors are keeping blood flowing throughout the body; they are still respiring the lungs in order to keep the tissues healthy should you make the decision to share those organs with someone else. Again, if there is no electrical activity in the brain, that person has died. So in this case, there realistically is no choice to make. Whether you pull the plug or not is almost really inconsequential. The person is already dead and their soul has moved on. If there is no brain activity, you can pull the plug without fear that your decision brought about the person's death.

Advance Directive or Living Wills

Topics such as brain death and PVS bring to mind the concept of advance directives. Sometimes we hear this particular word and we think to ourselves, “I am not really sure if this is something Christians should condemn or condone.” It was once believe that advanced directives played an active role in promoting the euthanasia movement. While that may have been the case initially, they are now a healthy way for Christians to tell their loved ones what their final wishes are in regards to heroic measures. An advanced directive is basically a document with two parts. The very first part allows you to designate a surrogate healthcare decision maker. Thus, if something happens to you and you are unable to make decisions (e.g., coma), you have someone who has been legally designated to make decisions for you. The second part of this form is basically called a living will and it allows a person to state, in very clear terms, what they desire regarding specific end-of-life decisions. For instance: Do you want heroic measures performed to keep you alive or not?

Nowhere in the Bible does it say that a Christian must embrace every single new medical technology. While we should always strive to sanctify human life, we are not required by God to use every means or pill that man has developed. And we should be thankful that the Bible does not require this, because a quick look back in history reveals man is not always right when it comes to the practice of medicine. For instance, we can look back to the days of George Washington, when it was believed that blood letting would help cure you of your ills. George Washington was bled out, but he did not get any better, so they bled him again, and he eventually died of that. You see, we know better today. We recognize that life is in the blood (Lev. 17:11). So the second part of this directive allows you to decide whether you want heroic measures or to die naturally. It is a document that basically says you get to have a little bit of say-so in what your final days really are like. This is similar to a “do not resuscitate” (DNR) order that is placed in the medical chart of someone who does not want to be resuscitated if they die. Having an

advance directive makes surrogate decision-making much easier on family members and loved ones.

Euthanasia

As many baby-boomers get older and are progressing into the final stages of their life, they are recalling back to how their parents or their grandparents died cruel painful deaths—maybe wasting away in a bed for many, many years. These individuals realize they do not want to live through this same scenario. And so, taking it upon their own “right,” they decide to terminate their life prematurely. One should consider the irony of this situation: individuals who would never consider aborting a baby find no problem taking an overdose of pills. Does this mean human life has a different value to God at different stages of life?

Euthanasia is the artificial or intentional putting to death by either an act or omission. Some have referred to this as the “good death.” Realistically, when you boil it down, euthanasia occurs when a physician (or loved one) administers a drug paralyzing the diaphragm resulting in the patient’s death. There are three categories of euthanasia. The first is voluntary euthanasia. This occurs when the person is assisted to die “in their best interest” after a competent request. In other words, the patient asks to die. The second form is nonvoluntary euthanasia. This occurs when a person is assisted to die in their best interest, but without being able to make such a request. In other words, maybe they are unable to respond or unable to write something down. The third is involuntary. It is where a person is assisted to die supposedly in their best interest but against their expressed wishes.

As we look at each of these categories through the lens of God’s Word, the question again is raised: What can a Christian condone, and what should we condemn? Is this something that is a “right” of human beings, or is this one of those cases where we consider Who gave us life to begin with? As many of you are approaching a time in your life where you have to make surrogate decisions for your parents, I believe this is a topic that we need to be discussing within the church. We need to be discussing it broadly across the country so

that Christians are prepared to make logical, rational, and Scriptural decisions rather than just emotional ones.

When the topic of euthanasia comes up, oftentimes one of the very first thoughts that come to mind is the name of Dr. Jack Kevorkian. Dr. Kevorkian, also known as Dr. Death, was an advocate for physician-assisted suicide. Simply put, Dr. Kevorkian believed that it was okay to end someone's life artificially. And in doing so, he actually facilitated the death of many people. He would devise contraptions where they could basically administer some kind of toxic substance to themselves or have someone do it for them. Dr. Kevorkian, as most of you are aware, spent many years in prison for performing physician-assisted suicides, but that was not without him opening the door to this controversial question: Should someone have the right to determine how they leave this world? Oftentimes when we talk about euthanasia, we hear phrases like quality of life or dying with dignity or without pain. And so many strive for that "good death." However, let me remind you that God never promised anyone a "good death" (consider the death of Christ for example!). None of the Apostles were promised "good deaths," and in fact most were savagely killed.

Consider the patient lying in the hospital bed who no longer resembles our parent or grandparent. In some instances, he or she may be in pain or struggling to breath. It is easy to comprehend why many family members are quick to ask for more and more pain-killers (morphine) which the medical staff knows will eventually suppress the respiratory system, killing the patient. But is that decision right?

In order to see the importance of this discussion, let us trace our history back just a moment to World War II. Most people are not aware that the holocaust movement was started because of how physicians began viewing some of their patients. In the July 14, 1949, issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, Leo Alexander, a man who had worked as chief counsel for war crimes, examined the initial causes of the holocaust, and he said the beginnings were simply a subtle shift in the emphasis and the basic attitude of physicians. Basically, it started with a belief that there was such a thing as a life

not worthy to be lived. Now, as you consider that, remember it was the Nazis who eventually came up with the term *useless eaters* to describe individuals who they viewed unworthy of life. This attitude then spread to others who did not meet the qualifications for the Aryan nation. Is this the attitude we hold today? We would never call those in hospital beds or nursing homes useless eaters, but is that not similar to our more sanitized phrase “quality of life.” The question remains, though, do we have the right to terminate that life?

In 1 Samuel 16:7, the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” What is God trying to convey to Samuel? He is trying to say that that outward appearance is not what He focuses on, but rather it is the inward man. How many times do we make a decision, maybe a surrogate decision on a patient based simply on the external features of that person? We look at him, and inwardly we say, “That is not a life worthy to be lived; that is not a quality life.” And yet God is saying I look at the inward man. Again, in Leviticus 19:32, we find Moses penning these words: “You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God. I am the Lord.” The notion here is that we are to give honor and respect the elderly, the gray headed. The psalmist declared: “Do not cast me off in the time of old age; do not forsake me when my strength fails” (Psa. 71:9) reminding us that just because someone is old is not a time to stick them in a nursing home and forget about them. Instead, we should have a clear Biblical understanding that God expects us to honor, to respect, and to care for the aging, not to kill them. Christians must realize that euthanasia violates God’s will, and should not be advocated in any form.

Pain and suffering

Rare is the congregation that does not have someone suffering from advance stages of cancer. This dreaded disease has become a staple in our prayer lists. Few things on this planet will exert the type of pain and agony that bone cancer can on the human body. But pain does not give mankind the ability to overlook God’s will. In Job

7:15-16 we find Job declaring “So that my soul chooses strangling and death rather than my body. I loathe my life; I would not live forever. Let me alone, for my days are but a breath.” At this stage in Job’s life, all he wanted to do was die quickly—but notice he did not hasten the process with his own hand. When we find our loved ones or ourselves in a situation of indescribable pain, we must recognize that there are pain medications available to help alleviate that pain. But we must understand that only God has the right to terminate life. Consider what would have happened if Job had not lived on. In the final chapter of this great book, we read “And the Lord restored Job’s losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before” (Job 42:10).

If we allow pain and suffering as a criteria for allowing death, we have indeed started down a slippery slope. Just how much pain is enough? Who gets to discern how much one should tolerate? In the 1970s, Holland legalized euthanasia for terminal patients. Since then, they have moved on to killing people with chronic conditions. In other words, they have started down a slippery slope, first killing terminally ill patients who requested death. Now they have moved on to chronically ill patients who ask to be killed, and now they are even killing infants born with defects who cannot ask to be killed. In fact, in 1995, more than one in forty-two deaths in Holland were assisted suicides. Even more alarming, something that really should wake us up today, is that one in four doctors admitted to killing patients without the patient’s request. Now, as you listen to those chilling words, please understand that there is a whole market out there today for euthanasia. We have death bags and all kinds of info packs. And all of the hype gathered around it has brought it front and center even to America. Oregon was the first state in 1997 to legalize euthanasia. It is now legal in several states. So just how much pain would be required for one to say they are unable to go on living? Who gets to decide where this all stops?

Feeding Tubes

Another controversy that should be mentioned in this area would be artificial feeding or tube feeding. A lot of people are

looking at this and maybe having to make decisions for a parent or grandparent. The one thing that I would encourage you strongly is to find out before that decision is needed, what is your parent's wish? What is their desire? Do they want to be placed on a feeding tube? Placing a feeding tube in someone is relatively easy, but pulling the tube out is a totally different matter. In fact, I would remind you that we do not have the right to terminate life through our decisions.

In considering feeding tubes, Christians should think about the Law of Cause and Effect. For every cause there must be an adequate effect prior to it. Now, let us examine that scientific law in regards to death: If a person dies (effect), what was the cause? Was the cause of death his own natural causes (or his own decision)? Or was the death brought about because of a decision we made? For instance, if we make a decision (e.g., to pull a feeding tube) and that "cause" results in the effect of dehydration and death, then we will have to give an account for our decision that ended his/her life.

Acts 17:28 reminds us that life is a gift from God. In fact, Paul here, as recorded by Luke, noted that we are the offspring of God. In Romans 14:8, writing to the church at Rome, Paul said, "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's." Finally, according to Romans 14:9, we must respect the integrity of life processes that God created, and we must remind ourselves that Christ is Lord of both the dead and the living. So when it comes to making some of these end-of-life decisions, reflect on that law of cause and effect and understand that as Christians we do not want to bring about someone's death. Rather, we want them to die of the natural processes when it is their time to die.

I hope as you look at the different scenarios and the different possibilities that you will, instead of being emotional or using only the guidance of a physician, that you use what God's Word says. Far too often, physicians have been trained at the feet of men who have bought into the evolutionary theory, who do not value life, and who do not think that we are made in the image and likeness of God. And

as such, the value they place on that life is going to be different than you and I.

Conclusion

Most physicians view death as failure. The essence of their job is to keep a patient alive while trying to return the infirmed to a satisfactory state of health. This nihilistic perspective of death has, in turn, been adopted by society at-large. Generally speaking, humans do everything within their power to avoid or postpone death. This fear of death and the unknown has been incredibly damaging to the Christian worldview and has caused many to question exactly what should a Christian do when it comes to end-of-life decisions.

If we really believe in God, and we believe He keeps His promises, then death should not be shunned or feared (John 14:1-3). Instead we should recognize that death is a homecoming to the Christian. While on earth we work for Him, looking forward to the day we get to go home. As a part of our daily walk, we must remember to honor those who are older and infirmed. Consider Ecclesiastes 12:

Remember now your Creator in the days of
your youth, Before the difficult days come, And
the years draw near when you say, "I have no
pleasure in them": While the sun and the light,
The moon and the stars, Are not darkened, And
the clouds do not return after the rain; In the
day when the keepers of the house tremble, And
the strong men bow down; When the grinders
cease because they are few, And those that look
through the windows grow dim; When the doors
are shut in the streets, And the sound of grinding
is low; When one rises up at the sound of a bird,
And all the daughters of music are brought
low. Also they are afraid of height, and of terrors
in the way; When the almond tree blossoms, The
grasshopper is a burden, And desire fails. For

man goes to his eternal home, And the mourners
go about the streets. (Ecc. 12:1-5)

At first glance this passage might seem to have nothing to do with the elderly. Go back and look at that verse again. Windows growing dim, I believe, is referring to their eyesight in older age. Maybe it is cataracts, or maybe it is glaucoma-but their eyes, they grow dim. Then you read about the sound of grinding is low. I do not think it is a surprise to anybody that as we age, oftentimes we become arthritic; we suffer from more aches and pains in our joints. What about, for instance, one rises up at the sound of a bird? Again, I do not think it is a mistake that the writer of this book used these phrases; when you think about an older person who oftentimes is not able to get a good night's sleep anymore, and they are up very early in the morning. Notice, though, what he says about they are afraid of height, there are terrors in the way. How many times have elderly people worried about falling down the steps or breaking a hip?

Over and over again in the Bible we are told to learn from the older generation (Tit. 2) and that older individuals have a command to teach their grandchildren (Deu. 4:9). In Galatians 2:10, Paul reminded Christians "*They desired* only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do." Ask yourself who were the poor at this time. It was primarily the elderly and those who were disabled who could not provide for themselves. If we begin terminating the lives of the elderly, who will do the teaching? If we kill the unborn through abortion, and we kill the elderly through euthanasia, what happens to the value of human life?

Job was a man who earnestly desired to die. But God had a bigger plan for Job. As faithful Christians, we must rest with the knowledge that God is in control. We should find peace in the knowledge that we can "know we have eternal life" (1 John 5:13).

As we seek to make end-of-life decisions, we must have the courage to stand for the sanctity of human life. We must understand that this world was not intended to be our final resting place, and that we were never promised a bed of roses. Instead we must protect the

very real truth that humans were created in the image and likeness of God, and therefore we have a soul that will one day spend eternity somewhere. Christians must focus on the Truth that through Jesus we can be victorious over death! Paul wrote, “O Death, where *is* your sting? O Hades, where *is* your victory?” The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law. But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:55-57; see also Heb. 2:14-15). The time that we die is not a matter for mankind to decide—rather it is in the hands of our Creator.

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CHAPTER 13

Though He Slay Me, Yet Will I Trust In Him

Nathan Liddell

Introduction

The story of Job is beautiful and beloved. It was first loved by the Jewish people in whose inspired canon it found a place. Among God's people of old, it was a "people's book" and a "cherished classic":

The Book of Job was not one of the books designated for public reading in the synagogues... It was rather a book for private reading.... Doubtless it was all the more intimately valued for this detachment from sanctuary associations; it was, like Proverbs, a people's book; and especially among the cultivators of Wisdom it must have been from its first publication a cherished classic. (Genung 1680)

And it has continued to be a precious poem for countless readers since its inspired writing. Alfred Lord Tennyson, who should know good poetry, called the book of Job, "the greatest poem, whether of ancient or modern literature" (Copeland). French poet Victor Hugo said of Job, "Tomorrow, if all literature was to be destroyed and it was left to me to retain one work only, I should save Job" (Copeland). And famous American orator and statesman Daniel Webster said, "The Book of Job taken as a mere work of literary genius, is one of the most wonderful productions of any age or of any language"

(Copeland). So beautiful is the language of Job, even in its English translation, that once outspoken atheist Christopher Hitchens, in commenting on the elegance of the King James translation, cited Job as an example saying:

A culture that does not possess this common store of images and allegories will be a perilously thin one. To seek relentlessly to update it or to make it 'relevant' is to miss the point, like yearning for a hip-hop Shakespeare. 'Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward,' says the Book of Job. Want to try to improve that for Twitter?" (Jacoby)

The story of Job, as beloved and beautiful as it is, however, is hard for me to read. Maybe it is hard for you, too. For me, this difficulty does not lie in lofty language, obscure meanings, or a disjointed narrative. In fact, the book of Job excels as a clear, direct, and accessible story. Rather, the trouble in reading the book of Job for me is its all too clear depiction of man's common condition, suffering, in one of its most disturbing extremes. In describing the suffering common to man, Job said, "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble" (King James Version, Job 14:1). Surely, Job's days were full of trouble! Who can read the account of Job's life, accepting it to be the historically reliable, inspired account that it is (Eze. 14:14; Jam. 5:11; 2 Tim. 3:16), without being deeply emotionally affected by it? Just as we begin to rejoice for Job (Job 1:1-3), our smiles fade and tears well in our eyes instead (Job 1:4-2:13). Our souls hardly begin to soar in the certainty of the goodness of God (cf. Job's great righteousness and great blessings), before our faith sinks, being put to the test by Job's experience of so many horrible things which he did not deserve (Job 2:3; Job 9:17).

With these things in mind, Job becomes a difficult book for me to read for an altogether different reason—for the reason of the questions that it raises about faith and God. Most commentators

agree that “the question to be solved, as exemplified in the case of Job, is, Why are the righteous afflicted?” (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown). This question, as troubling as it can be, is only one of many we might ask, all of which are variations on the tormenting theme, “Why?!” It is an uncomfortable but unavoidable question. More frustrating still is the fact that it is in many respects an unanswered question.

These difficult questions are not entirely fruitless though. They serve as a context for many priceless life lessons. Among them is the fine lesson which Job teaches us of persevering hope. There is a hope which may not be quenched even by life’s most overwhelming floods. Such was Job’s hope, the hope by which he refused to curse God and die, the hope in which he carried on despite instant poverty, total bereavement, emotional abandonment, and destroyed health. He endured such anguish in and by hope. This is the hope we must have: the hope which will anchor our souls (Heb. 6:19); the hope which takes us through the veil and to an eternal reward; the hope by which we are saved (Rom. 8:24). Job’s persevering spirit inspires the downcast saint today and for it alone, the difficulty of reading the book is worth undertaking.

Worthy of our consideration now is Job’s expression of pure hope found in Job 13:15-16:

Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: But
I will maintain mine own ways before him. He
also *shall be* my salvation: For an hypocrite shall
not come before him.

These words teach us three important lessons about hope. First, we learn what hope is. Second, we learn where hope is found. Third, we learn when we should hope and when we should not hope.

What Hope Is

Hope is patient waiting in confident expectation of future good. The word used by Job and translated *trust* in the King James version is the Hebrew word *yahal*. It is often translated by the words *hope* or

wait (cf. NASB, ESV). This word, which occurs seven times in the book of Job, signifies a long patient waiting. It conveys perseverance in expectation that God will vindicate, reward, or recompense the righteous. Consider as examples:

What *is* my strength, that I should **hope**? And what *is* mine end, that I should prolong my life? (Job 6:11)

If a man die, shall he live *again*? All the days of my appointed time will I **wait**, Till my change come. (Job 14:14)

And they **waited** for me as for the rain; And they opened their mouth wide *as* for the latter rain. (Job 29:23)

I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: Mine eyes fail while I **wait** for my God. (Psa. 69:3)

It is good that *a man* should both **hope** and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. (Lam. 3:26)

Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will **wait** for the God of my salvation: My God will hear me. (Mic. 7:7)

When translated into Greek (i.e., the Septuagint), *yachal* is rendered by *elpizo* or *hupomeino*, words which are used in the following verses, among others:

That by two immutable things, in which *it was* impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold

upon the **hope** set before us: Which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil. (Heb. 6:18-19)

Now faith is the substance of things **hoped** for, the evidence of things not seen. (Heb. 11:1)

For we are saved by **hope**: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet **hope** for? (Rom. 8:24)

Of this word, Gilchrist says:

Yahal is used of “expectation, hope” which for the believer is closely linked with “faith, trust” and results in patient waiting. The sense of expectation may be positive, i.e. hoping for good in the future...this *yahal* “hope” is not a pacifying wish of the imagination which drowns out troubles, nor is it uncertain...but rather *yahal* “hope” is the solid ground of expectation for the righteous. As such it is directed towards God...No greater testimony to such confident expectation is given than when Job cries out, “Though He slay me, yet will I hope in Him (Job 13:15)...*yahal* clearly demonstrates the confidence of the righteous in God’s future action at a time when sin is being judged... Not only does hope bring relief from present problems, but also in the eschatological sense “hope” in God’s help and ultimate salvation will bring to an end all distress. One needs to look at Isaiah 51:5 where God promises his omnipotent help, “My righteousness is near, my salvation has

gone forth, and my arms will judge the people;
the coastland will wait for me, and for my arm
they will wait expectantly.” (373-74)

Thus, Job confidently expected that he would be delivered. At some time in the future, whether in this life or the next, he would be vindicated as a righteous man who did not deserve to be punished by God or excluded from God’s blessings. A day would come when he would make his case (“nevertheless I will maintain mine ways before him” Job 13:15)(cf. Job 40:1-2). His friends would be rebuked in their baseless and unfair accusations against him (cf. Job 42:7). His salvation or deliverance from his present miserable circumstances would come (Job 13:16). His captivity would finally be turned (Job 42:10; cf. Ps. 126:1). Like the Jews in Babylonian captivity who waited for their seventy-year sentence to end, so Job waited patiently for the day when he would know happiness and God’s preserving care again.

It was in this hope, that Job had the strength to remain faithful to God. So, for us, this hope will be what allows us to finish our course and keep the faith. In this sense, hope saves us (Rom. 8:24-25). Hope causes us to “run with patience the race that is set before us”(Heb. 12:1-2). It anchors our souls in faith when life’s storms come (Heb. 6:19). By hope, we see within the veil to God and heaven and thus are able to wait patiently for the future good which is guaranteed the righteous, eternal life (Tit. 1:2). For this reason, we are warned against moving away from “the hope of the Gospel” (Col. 1:23). As Job never let go of his hope, so we must never let go of ours!

It should be said about hope, though, that it is not a blind wish. Many will “hope” in this sense in life. They will believe that somehow someday things will get better for them, maybe even through God’s help. As an example of this, it has been found that men on death row, for example, experience what is called a “delusion of reprieve,” the strange idea that somehow at the last moment they will be saved from their punishment (Bell). This “hope,” of course, is a delusion. It is not based in anything real. Job’s hope, however, was no delusion

or wish. It was a confident expectation. How could Job, in so much pain and anguish, maintain a confident hope? It is because Job hoped “in Him.”

Where Hope is Found

Hope is found only in God. Job was in a perfect position to teach us this lesson (and, perhaps that is one answer for our question, why are the righteous afflicted?). First, by his life, Job teaches us that hope is not found anywhere else. Had he not suffered the loss of his abundant wealth, we might believe that his happiness, his preservation from life’s troubles, and the future good that would come his way were somehow a result of his riches. But he lost those riches (Mat. 6:19-21). Had he not suffered the loss of his family and their support, we might falsely conclude that life’s troubles may be warded off and certain future happiness found in family alone (Mat. 10:36ff.). But Job did lose his family. Again, had he not lost his physical health, we might be tempted to believe hope for future improvement of life’s circumstances or future preservation is bound up in the strength of our physical bodies (Ecc. 12:1-7). But Job did lose his health. The fact is, Job lost everything—except God!

Second, Job’s life provides an opportunity for us to believe what Job believed: God is worthy of our trust. I am convinced that Job believed God had made a mistake. Job, though believing God was good (Job 1:21), seems still to have believed that God had made a mistake in his case. For this reason, he said he would argue his case before God (Job 13:15). In this complaint, he believed he deserved an umpire or daysman between himself and God (Job 9:33). He was rebuked by Zophar, evidently, for believing he understood God and God’s ways, that he had found out the deep things of God, and in so doing, had found God’s mistake (Job 11:7ff). Ultimately, of course, he had no complaint to level against God. Rather, he covered his mouth and repented of such an attitude (Job 40:4; Job 42:1-6). It seems Job believed God had done wrong by him, but that he would ultimately do right. Job learned, however, that God had never done wrong by him but had always done right.

Then Job answered the Lord, and said, I know that thou canst do every *thing*, And *that* no thought can be withholden from thee. Who *is* he that hideth counsel Without knowledge? Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; Things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: But now mine eye seeth thee. Therefore I abhor *myself*, and repent In dust and ashes. (Job 42:1-7)

There was something wonderful in God's plan which Job did not understand. When he saw God, he understood this. And this is what we all believe about God's providential plan and our part in it as we read the sweet words of Romans 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose." We may not understand everything about God's plan, especially as that plan allows for or includes our suffering, but we trust that it is in our best interest and in the best interest of the saving of souls. Paul indicated that he had faith in God's plan though it included his own suffering:

But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things *which happened* unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other *places*; And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. (Phi. 1:12-14)

Thus, we believe that God is indeed good (Psa. 100:5) and he is worthy of our trust as His providential care will always be in our best interest. This does not mean that our lives will be spared trouble.

In fact, it seems to mean that we most certainly will be allowed to experience difficulty (2 Tim. 3:12; 2 Cor. 12:7-10; Jam. 1:2ff). And we may not always be able to see how this is true, that God is working in our best interest. But I am certain that when we see God, as Job did, we will, like Job, be overwhelmed by this wonderful fact.

As was true for Job, so it is true for us; God is our only hope (Eph. 2:12). But what a great hope He is! He blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning (Job 42:12). Is there a better description of the heavenly reward for which we wait?

When We Should Hope and When We Should Not Hope

As the faithful, we should always hope in God. Job said, “Though He slay me, yet will trust (hope) in Him” (Job 13:15). I wonder what the story of Job would be if he had given up his hope. Would he be the subject of an inspired book of the Bible? Would we be studying it now? It seems there are many more stories about giving up hope than about keeping it. Job’s story has great power for encouraging because he did not give up his hope! He did not give up his hope when a lifetime of amassed wealth was lost in a moment (Job 1:13-17). He did not give up his hope when his children were killed, all ten in a single tragic accident (Job 1:18-19). I can hardly imagine this. He did not give up his faith when his body was so smitten with boils that his friends could not recognize him (Job 2:12). He did not give up his hope when his wife gave up hers (Job 2:9). He did not give up his hope when his friends falsely accused him (Job 42:7). He did not give up his hope when God’s way did not make sense to him (Job 6:4). He did not give up his hope when his grief was beyond measure (Job 6:2). He did not give up his hope when convinced that all of life was trouble (Job 14:1). He did not give up his hope when he was sure that life was unfair (Job 2:3; Job 9:17). Name the negative circumstance and the conclusion is the same: Job refused to give up his hope! And how thankful he must have been that he retained his hope! The latter end with Job was better than the beginning. It finally got better. Would it have if he had given up his hope?

So today, as a friend of mine once preached in preaching school, “Now is not the time to give up.” Can you relate to Job? Are you more acquainted with grief than you would like to be? Is your hope paper-thin? Will you give up now? We are told over and over again that we must not give up. Jesus said, “We ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luke 18:1). In declaring his refusal to faint or give up, Paul said:

For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal. For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (2 Cor. 4:16-5:1)

There simply is too much future good at stake for us to give up now. Why, even if we were to face death, and we all will one day, we must retain our hope! We must “hold fast our confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end” (Heb. 3:6). As Peter admonished first-century Christians in the face of fiery trials, so we must “hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought...at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:13). May we never give up our hope in God.

There is, however, a time when we should not hope. This fact is found in the final words of our text which say, “for an hypocrite shall not come before Him” (Job 13:16). There are some who have no reason to hope, none whatsoever. This is not the time to hope. And should they continue on their present course, the judgment

day will not be the time to hope either. Job says the *godless* (NASB) have no hope of standing before God, a phrase which means simply to be found pleasing to God in His court of judgment (cf Psa. 1:5). Will the godless hope, confidently expect, and wait patiently for deliverance from evil by God? How could they sustain such a hope?! Nevertheless, many workers of iniquity believe that they will be approved of God on the day of judgment (Mat. 7:21-23). This is only a false hope though (Eze. 13:6) which is really no hope at all. These, like the man on death row, are deluded. They are “without God” and have “no hope” in the world (Eph. 2:12). Now is not the time for the godless to hope.

Conclusion

As a preacher of the Gospel, though, I am thankful to be able to say that anyone today can have the hope that Job had. Do you want to have a hope which will sustain you through the worst of life’s difficulties, a hope which will bear you up even in the face of death? Such a hope is available to you today, only in “our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ...our hope” (1 Tim. 1:1). If you know this hope, dear reader, like Job, regardless of what comes your way in life, you must hold it firm to the end.

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CHAPTER 14

A Few Days And Full Of Trouble: What We Learn About Life From Job's Struggle

Terry Jones

The Apostle Paul declared, “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (New King James, Rom. 15:4). The Old Testament was written not only for those who lived under it, but also for us today. From it we learn about God and His relationship with man. Certainly, there is much for us to learn in that regard from the oldest book of the Bible—the book of Job.

The story of Job is one that is relevant to the life of every person. In times of personal struggle and suffering, we can look to Job for wisdom, direction, and strength. Job was a servant of God who suffered for good. He “was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil” (Job 1:1). God had so blessed him that he was “the greatest of all the people of the East” (Job 1:3). Then Satan got involved and things changed dramatically, tragically, and swiftly. In the course of a single day, Job suffered the loss of his seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, all of his servants, and all ten of his children. Soon thereafter, Job was stricken with painful boils from head to toe. When things seemingly could not get worse, his wife advised him to “curse God and die” (Job 2:9)!

In the aftermath of such catastrophe and in the midst of the deepest suffering, one would surmise that Job, perhaps, would give up on life, lose faith in God, and give serious consideration to suicide. Instead, the inspired record states, “Then Job arose, tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said: ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.’ In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong” (Job 1:20-22).

This is certainly a testament to greatness of this outstanding man of God. Where is Job’s equal in the breadth of service, the depth of suffering, the height of faith, and length of patience? One would have to point to the Son of God for a superior example. Obviously, and thankfully, the story of Job has been written for our learning. From the struggle of Job we can learn much to help in our own lives.

Faith In God

Job was not a fair-weathered friend of God. He sacrificed to God in times of gladness (Job 1:5) and worshiped God in times of sadness (Job 1:20). The increase of suffering did not diminish his faith. Many are the lessons we learn from Job about faith in God.

No Struggle Is So Great That One Cannot Maintain Faith In God

Though Job’s suffering was unbelievably intense, his faith was uncommonly immense. No matter how great the burden, God will not allow it to grow beyond our ability to withstand. Paul asserted that “no temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13). Hebrews 11 mentions several great Bible characters known for their extraordinary faith in God. There we read the names of such notable folks as Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham. Job’s name is conspicuously absent from this list; however, it would appear that the Holy Spirit could have easily included it. Myriads of individuals have lost their faith in God under much lesser circumstances, but

Job convinces us that no matter how severe the trial, it cannot exceed our faith unless we allow it.

We May Suffer Without Ever Knowing Why

In the midst of physical, emotional, psychological, social, and spiritual agony, Job did not know what was going on behind the scenes. He had no knowledge of the conversations between Satan and God. He was unaware that Satan's attack upon him was because of God's faith in Job (Job 1:8). Satan's attack on Job failed because of Job's faith in God. Job accepted his lot but sought the reason why he was suffering. His friends believed that he was being punished for some secret sin in his life. He maintained his integrity and called upon God to vindicate him by providing an answer. God finally spoke but never revealed the reason why.

In His speech to Job, God explained neither about His meeting with Satan nor about the accusations and request made by Satan. He did not explain about the test for which he had given permission to Satan. No doubt, if Job had known all of these details, it would have been much easier for him to have borne all of the suffering. But God did not explain. He did not explain about the request of Satan. He did not explain the details about the Coming Redeemer. He gave no explanation of the general problem of suffering.

Why was God silent on all of these problems which plagued the soul of this good man? Because it was His desire that Job would continue to trust Him in spite of not having the answers to these problems. (Warren 104)

Faith In God Enables A Proper Response To Struggles

Faced with tragedy, many would question the love of God or even the existence of God. Upon learning of the loss of all his wealth

and the death of all ten of his children, Job responded by falling to the ground and worshiping God (Job 1:20). Tragedy is not a time to be turning away from God, but a time to run to God. When Stephen was preaching in Jerusalem, the Jews rejected the message and attacked the messenger. “Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him” (Acts 7:57-58). Rather than soften the message or compromise his faith, he demonstrated great faith by standing up for God. “And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not charge them with this sin.’ And when he had said this, he fell asleep” (Acts 7:59-60). In the face of danger, Stephen countered with a response of faith and forgiveness. When Job’s life was stricken, he responded by affirming faith in God. He said, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him” (Job 13:15).

Faithfulness To God

“There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil” (Job 1:1). Job was a wonderful example of one who was faithful to God. There are many things that we learn from him concerning faithfulness to God.

Faithfulness To God Does Not Shield Us From Tragedy

It is true that the very best possible life that one could live is one that is devoted to service to the Lord. However, it must be remembered that being faithful to God does not mean that no suffering will come our way.

This profound drama also teaches us that God *does take note* of the conduct of the righteous. He was extremely proud of Job. And though the Lord does bless the godly, the principle is not invariable; the Creator can choose to bless or to withhold, to prosper or to discipline, as

He chooses, consistent with purposes which He has not disclosed to man. Godliness does not, therefore, guarantee one that he or she will be free from affliction. Nonetheless, the general principle “righteousness pays” is true. For now, and most certainly for eternity! (Jackson 97)

Unfortunately, the devil has many agents that spout a message that promises folks that if they will give their life to the Lord that He will take away all of their pain and all of their problems. There is no evidence of a shred of truthfulness in that. That was certainly not true of any of the great people of the Bible. For example, the patriarch Jacob grieved for years, having been deceived into thinking that his son Joseph had been killed. A more faithful servant of God cannot be found in the entire Bible than Joseph. Yet, he was despised by his own brothers who sold him into slavery. He overcame that only to be falsely accused of wrong and cast into prison for two years. Then there are the apostles and prophets who suffered beatings, imprisonment, and even death for their faithful service to God. God has never promised to exempt us from tragedy, but He has promised to be with us in our suffering. God did not deliver Daniel’s three friends from the fiery furnace, but He walked through the fire with them (Dan. 3:25). The Lord promised, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Heb. 13:5).

Not Every Man Has A Price

Satan said to God, “All that a man has he will give for his life” (Job 2:4). He believed that Job would sacrifice everything that he had to spare his own life. Sometimes it is said that every man has his price. By that it is meant that every person would be willing to compromise their integrity if there were enough to be gained. Though that may be true for many, it is not true of everyone, and it certainly was not true of Job.

The Value Of Prayer

Faithfulness to God and a healthy prayer life go hand in hand. A man cannot walk with God if he does not talk to God. As Job

struggled to understand why all this misery had fallen upon him, he sought answers from God. The Lord seemed distant from him, and yet, Job continued to pray for answers.

Jesus knew the value of prayer when He was on earth. "Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed" (Mark 1:35). In Gethsemane, Jesus instructed His disciples to "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mat. 26:41). James taught the value of prayer, especially in difficult times. "Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven" (Jam. 5:13-15).

The Father In Heaven

God Does Not Act Unjustly

Bildad asked Job, "Does God subvert judgment? Or does the Almighty pervert justice?" (Job 8:3). Bildad believed that Job's suffering was punishment for sin and for Job to deny it was to impugn God of perverting justice. When Abraham was bargaining with God on Sodom's behalf, he said, "Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right" (Gen. 18:25)? It is impossible for God to act unjustly. We must be careful not to attribute any wrong-doing or injustice to God. He is the just Judge of us all. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

God's Silence Does Not Necessarily Mean Disapproval

From beneath a mountain of misery, Job continued to plead with God that he might present his case before Him. "I cry out to You, but You do not answer me; I stand up, and you regard me" (Job 30:20). The loneliness that Job must have felt is unimaginable. His children

were dead, his wife had forsaken him, his friends were accusing him, and God would not talk to him.

David expressed a similar experience when he prayed, “How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me” (Psa. 13:1)? More than anyone else, Jesus understood exactly how Job felt. During the crucifixion the record states, “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’” (Mat. 27:46). In all of these instances, God was silent, but it in no way meant that He was not carefully and compassionately monitoring those events.

Fortune

Material Wealth Is Unstable

Job serves as a vivid reminder of how insecure material possessions really are. Though he appears to have been the wealthiest man of his time, he lost it all in a day. Thankfully, Job trusted in the Lord and not his wealth. Jesus warned, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses” (Luke 12:15).

Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ “So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.’” But God said to him, “Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?” So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. (Luke 12:16-21)

As the old saying goes, “Here today and gone tomorrow.” Those who have been the victims of flood, fire, hurricane, tornado, or some other sudden disaster are very aware of how unstable material possessions are. For those who have not learned that, they need to be warned. “Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life” (1 Tim. 6:17-19). Jesus taught, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Mat. 6:19-21).

True Happiness Is Not Found In Possessions

Job’s life was not defined by his possessions but by who possessed him. His life was not built upon his massive wealth. He made that clear when he declared, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21). That is similar to what Paul taught:

Now godliness with contentment is great gain.
For we brought nothing into this world, and
it is certain we can carry nothing out. And
having food and clothing, with these we shall
be content. But those who desire to be rich fall
into temptation and a snare, and into many
foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in
destruction and perdition. For the love of money
is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have
strayed from the faith in their greediness, and
pierced themselves through with many sorrows.
(1 Tim. 6:6-10)

Paul was not only speaking by inspiration, he was speaking from experience. He had sacrificed many things for the cause of Christ. "Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ" (Phi. 3:8).

The Flesh

Intense Suffering Can Cause One To Despise His Birth

"After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. And Job spoke, and said: 'May the day perish on which I was born, And the night in which it was said, A male child is conceived'" (Job 3:1-3). Some have been heard to say, "I wish I had never been born!" That is exactly what Job was saying. His suffering is so intense that he felt that it would have been better if he had not been born. Jesus said of Judas, "The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had never been born" (Mark 14:21). How terrible it would be to suffer such misery to the extent of wishing that the day of one's birth had never occurred.

Sometimes The Righteous Suffer Because They Are Righteous

The friends of Job accused him of being a sinner and, therefore, suffering the consequences of it. They gave no consideration to the possibility that a man could suffer simply because he is righteous. "Then the Lord said to Satan, 'Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil'" (Job 1:8)? It was inconceivable to Job and his friends that a man would be subjected to such extreme trials simply because he was righteous. Jesus taught that very thing in the Sermon on the Mount. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Mat. 5:10-12). Paul told Timothy, "Yes, and

all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12).

Family And Friends

As we continue our examination of the struggles faced by Job, we learn some valuable things about his family and friends. Usually when one has experienced tragedy and death among his loved ones, family and friends will gather to comfort and console. Unfortunately, Job was not even able to experience any relief from those sources.

He has removed my brothers far from me, And
my acquaintances are completely estranged
from me. My relatives have failed, and my close
friends have forgotten me. Those who dwell in
my house, and my maidservants, Count me as
a stranger; I am an alien in their sight. I call my
servant, but he gives no answer; I beg him with
my mouth. My breath is offensive to my wife,
And I am repulsive to the children of my own
body. Even young children despise me; I arise,
and they speak against me. All my close friends
abhor me, And those whom I love have turned
against me. (Job 19:13-19)f

The Suffering Need Comfort, Not Criticism

When dealing with severe tragedy, one needs to be surrounded by loved ones who will provide comfort and assurance that a brighter day will dawn. “To him who is afflicted, kindness should be shown by his friend, Even though he forsakes the fear of the Almighty” (Job 6:14). Job needed a show of support and encouragement, but of his friends he said, “Miserable comforters are you all!” (Job 16:2). Job assured his friends that if the situation was reversed, “I would strengthen you with my mouth, And the comfort of my lips would relieve your grief” (Job 16:5). The Bible teaches us that we are to “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep” (Rom. 12:15).

Foes

Satan Is The True Source Of Our Struggles

Unfortunately, God seems to always get the blame when bad things happen. When a house burns down, a baby dies, or a financial crisis arises, more often than not, God will receive the blame. If we do not learn anything else from Job, we should realize that Satan is source of all the struggles that we face in life. Why is it that we are so quick to blame God, and at the same time, fail to see our adversary as the source of our plight? After all, the Bible is very clear on the matter. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). That is exactly what he was doing in Job’s day. “And the Lord said to Satan, ‘From where do you come?’ So Satan answered the Lord and said, ‘From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it’” (Job 1:7).

Suffering Is One Of Satan’s Devices To Get Us To Sin

Satan’s goal was not simply the enjoyment of watching Job suffer. His goal was to get Job to sin by turning against God. Satan said to God, “But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face” (Job 1:11). Satan believed that if God’s servant was stripped of all his possessions and his posterity that he would turn against God. But the Bible says, “In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong” (Job 1:22).

Satan Is Tenacious

After afflicting Job in such a devastating way in chapter one, it is unimaginable that Satan would heap further misery upon him in chapter two. The fact that it happened should impress upon us that Satan is tenacious in his attacks. It should be remembered that the devil may return again and again. Following the forty days that the devil severely tempted Jesus in the wilderness, the Bible says, “Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time” (Luke 4:13). We are to “resist the devil and he will flee from you” (Jam. 4:7). Yet, we must not let down our guard because he will return.

Struggles Are From Satan But Limited By God

In the first round of attack, Satan challenged God that if He would take away all that Job had, he would turn against Him. “And the Lord said to Satan, ‘Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person.’ Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord” (Job 1:12). Here we learn that Satan was responsible for the affliction, but God set the boundaries of it prohibiting Satan from touching Job himself. When that did not work, Satan again challenged God, “But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!” And the Lord said to Satan, ‘Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life” (Job 2:5-6). Once again it is made clear that Satan is the attacker, but God, as He always is, was in control placing limitations upon the affliction.

The Future

The suffering of Job is beyond our ability to comprehend. We marvel that through it all he maintained his own integrity and never lost his faith in God. Job's success must be attributed, at least in part, to his focus on the future. Ultimately, he believed that he would see God. Several things can be learned from Job as they relate to the future.

Life's Struggles Can Make Death Preferable To Life

When Job's wife advised him to “curse God and die!” (Job 2:9), he rebuked her. But after months of painful agony, he welcomed death as a relief from misery.

Why is light given to him who is in misery, and
life to the bitter of soul, Who long for death, but
it does not come, And search for it more than
hidden treasures; Who rejoice exceedingly, And
are glad when they can find the grave? Why is
light given to a man whose way is hidden, And
whom God has hedged in? For my sighing comes
before I eat, And my groanings pour out like

water. For the thing I greatly feared has come upon me, and what I dreaded has happened to me. I am not at ease, nor am I quiet; I have no rest, for trouble comes. (Job 3:20-26)

He longed for death with the passion of one searching for hidden treasure, but it did not come. His suffering was so great that he could not eat, nor could he find rest. The time had arrived that death had a greater appeal to him than life.

The apostle Paul reached a time when he entertained this very idea. He said, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you" (Phi. 1:21-24). When living provides neither rest from pain nor peace from problems, the grave begins to have an appeal. The words of Revelation 14:13 have eased the burden of countless suffering saints. "Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, 'Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Yes,' Says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.'"

My Redeemer Lives And I Shall See Him

Job did not understand why he was suffering and he had far more questions than he had answers. However, that did not rob him of the conviction that he would ultimately see God. "For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns with me" (Job 19:25-27)! He had lost his wealth, his health, his family, and his friends, but he had not lost faith that he would see God. "It is heartening to know that even in that early age some intimation of a life beyond stirred in the hearts of the faithful, even though it was vague and not clearly defined" (Woods 99). This burst of confidence by Job reminds us of that grand declaration of Paul when he said, "For this reason I also

suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day” (2 Tim. 1:12).

Conclusion

There are a great number of things that we can learn from Job's struggles. Unfortunately, we tend to learn more from life's struggles than from its pleasures. Robert Hamilton stated that well in the following poem.

Sorrow

I walked a mile with pleasure
She chatted all the way
But left me none the wiser
For all she had to say.

I walked a mile with sorrow
And not a word said she.
But O the things I learned from her
When sorrow walked with me.

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CHAPTER 15

Coming Forth As Gold

Eric Owens

The subject of Job is a huge undertaking; both the book and man touch on some very important issues of life. Who is God? Does He care about humanity? Is God worth serving, even if He does not bless man? Will a man remain faithful if he believes God has moved against him? Why do humans suffer; is it because they sin? Or are there other explanations for human suffering? Does God owe man an explanation for His actions? Does Satan know our thoughts and weaknesses? These are some of the major themes addressed in Job.

As humans, we empathize and relate to Job; after all, he is one of us. When we read the book of Job, we also are extremely interested in the work of Satan. He is God's enemy, the accuser and slanderer of men, and he is against us. While both Satan and man are interesting, our eyes always need to be fixed on God, for He is for us.

Our subject of study fits the theme perfectly; it centers on something Job said as recorded in Job 23:10. In the midst of lamenting his condition, Job made this insightful comment, "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (King James Version, Job 23:10).

We know that Job came through his trials as gold; the question is how can we (Jam. 5:10-12). Let us discuss how he did it and how we can emulate his actions. The first answer discussed may be the most important. Coming forth as gold demands:

A Proper Scriptural View Of God

God, not Job or Satan, is the central character of this book. The deepest questions and greatest points of contention in the book

are about God. This book, maybe like no other, serves to teach us who God is and what kind of God we serve. This is especially true concerning the subject of human suffering. Never has Abraham's question about God been more relevant: "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right" (Gen. 18:25)?

When it comes to dealing with challenges, heartbreak, loss and especially death, nothing is more central to our success or failure than what we think of God. Everyone in the book has an opinion about God; unfortunately, most of them are wrong.

Satan Is Wrong About God

Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. (Job 1:9-11)

Satan accused God of buying Job's service. This is the premise of the book: Is God worth serving if he gives man nothing? Put in reverse is God worth serving if a man loses everything he holds dear? What if he loses his possessions, the support of his wife, his children, and even his health? Will he continue to serve God faithfully, or will he curse God and die?

This is the point of contention in the book. The discussion between God and Satan occurs before Job suffers the loss of anything. It sets the stage for the events of the book. We learn some very important things about Satan from the book of Job; namely, Satan does not know our weakness and Satan does not know our thoughts. Satan made a declarative statement about Job. He contended that if God took his things, Job would curse God to his face. God allowed Satan to take Job's things and Job did not curse God to his face; thus, Satan was wrong.

If Satan knew Job's weaknesses, why not use them instead of the things he did use and was wrong about both times (Job 1 and 2). Satan failed in this book and he had Job in the palm of his hands. Satan was wrong about God and he was wrong about Job.

Eliphaz And His Friends Were Wrong About God.

Shall mortal man be more just than God: shall
a man be more pure than his maker? Behold,
he put no trust in his servants; and his angels
he charged with folly; How much less in them
that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation
is in the dust which are crushed before the moth?
They are destroyed from morning to evening:
they perish forever without any regarding it.
(Job 4:18-20)

Eliphaz and his friends charged God with many things throughout the book. They charged God with having no trust in angels; this is wrong. God sent angels on missions for those who would inherit eternal salvation, He trusts his holy angles (Heb. 1:14). They charged God with not caring about humanity, Eliphaz said men perish forever without any regarding it. This is wholly untrue about God. He does not even take pleasure when the wicked perish (Eze. 18:23). How much more are the lives and deaths of those who are righteous important to God?

The Psalmist declares, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psa. 116:15). God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son (John 3:16). God is good and His mercy endures forever (Psa. 136). He loved us while we were yet sinners (Rom. 5:6-8). Eliphaz and his friends could not have been more wrong about God. Thankfully, God corrected Eliphaz and his friends,

And it was so, that after the Lord has spoken
these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the
Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and

against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. (Job 42:7)

Job Was Wrong About God

Then Job arose, and rent his mantle and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground and worshipped. And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. (Job 1:20-21)

It is very important to remember that Job did not have the benefit of knowing about the conversation between God and the Devil recorded in chapter one. Therefore, Job's position that God was causing his suffering is his point of reference for the things he says within the book. Job still regards God very highly; he honors God. However, we should not feel like Job does. We have the benefit of chapter one and the rest of the Bible to shape our view of God.

How Job Came Forth As Gold?

Job Believed God Was Trying Him

For Job the events in his life are all attributable to the direct actions of God. He is convinced that for reasons unknown to him, God has moved against him. Job does not simply believe he has gotten some bad breaks or that he is going through a rough patch. This is not the uneven bounces of life's ball. All of this is better understood by Solomon's statement, that time and chance happens to us all (Ecc. 9:11).

No, Job believes that God has searched for him through the sea of humanity and found him. He believes that the God who gave him all of the nice things he once enjoyed has decided without rhyme or reason to take them back (Job 1:20-21). Not only has he repossessed the things, He has also taken Job's children, reputation, comfort,

sleep, and health. And in what is the worst part of it all for Job, God has stopped hearing or speaking to him. Still, Job had a high regard for and high view of God.

Job Believed God Would Listen To Him

Then Job answered and said, Even to day *is* my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning. Oh that I knew where I might find him! *that* I might come *even* to his seat! I would order *my* cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. (Job 23:1-4)

Job believed his punishment was great; thus his complaint was bitter. The stroke against him was heavy. However, instead of allowing his suffering to turn him away from God, he turned to God. He wanted to know where God was so he could find Him. Because he believed if he could find Him, he would be able to come to His seat. Thus before Him, Job believed that God would invite him into His presence. Unlike Job's friends, Job believed God was approachable.

Yet, Job believed more: he believed that God would listen to him. He states that he would order his cause; he would fill his mouth with arguments. He is not angry with God; this is not a disrespectful child pointing an angry finger in the face of a parent. He would not bark at God and complain about his bad treatment. These are statements about God and his goodness.

Job believes his problem is distance and location, not the character of God. Instead of thinking God is evil, he believes there must be a misunderstanding. Therefore, if he could find Him, God would listen to him and allow him to explain his side. Job believes God loves him; this is further evidenced by the next thing he says.

Job Believed God Would Help Him

I would know the words *which* he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me.

Will he plead against me with *his* great power?
No; but he would put *strength* in me. There the
righteous might dispute with him; so should I be
delivered for ever from my judge. (Job 23:5-7)

Unlike Job's friends who are constant in their cries of how uncompassionate God is, Job sees God differently. Job knows what God would answer him; he is sure God would understand him. This great statement says volumes about God. Will he plead against me with his great power? No. To Job, God is merciful, kind, and gracious. He would not talk down to Job. He would not use His great power to shut Job up.

God would not plead against him; rather, God would put strength in me. Note how the English Standard Version translates the verse, "Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power? No; he would pay attention to me" (Job 23:6).

There is a monumental difference in how Job views God and how everyone else in the book does. What a wonderful view he has of God. There the righteous might dispute with him and be delivered.

The Bible is full of examples of the righteous ordering their cause before God. Abraham questioned God and found that God does right (Gen. 18:25). Moses constantly pled for Israel and was heard (Num. 14:11-20). David cried out to God (Psa. 22:1-24), Jeremiah ordered his cause before God (Jer. 12:1-3), Habakkuk appealed to God and orders his cause about God's decisions (Hab. 1:13). Jonah even expressed anger at God (Jon. 4:1-5). When the righteous order their cause, they are heard and God helps; He pays attention and strengthens them (1 Pet. 3:12).

Job Believed God Knew Him

Behold, I go forward, but he *is* not *there*; and
backward, but I cannot perceive him: On the left
hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold
him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I
cannot see *him*: But he knoweth the way that I

take: *when* he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. (Job 23:8-10)

Job admitted his lack of knowledge of God. He was searching for God, yet he had no success of finding Him. Neither did he have any knowledge of God's actions. Job laments that "I go forward but he is not there; backward but I cannot perceive him. I move left and right, but I do not know where he is working or what he is doing. I cannot see him."

All of this speaks to a very important truth. Our knowledge of God is limited by God's revelation of Himself. We cannot know what God has not chosen to tell us (Deu. 29:29). This should give us great pause before we declare our knowledge of God's activities. It is amazing to hear people speak with such certainty about the events of their life and attribute them to God's actions. Scripture is clear that we cannot know the mind of God unless he reveals it to us (1 Cor. 2:8-13); still, many make false claims about God.

These invalid claims include everything from having a child to losing a child, getting married or even divorced, finding a job or house, buying a car, or losing one's health. Some even blame the destruction of natural calamities on God. Folks talk with great accuracy that God did these things to them or for them. This is exactly how Job's friends talked. Like many today, Job's friends were even willing to make up stories to bolster their claims. Eliphaz spun quite a tale,

The roaring of the lion, and the voice of the fierce lion, and the teeth of the young lions, are broken. The old lion perisheth for lack of prey, and the stout lion's whelps are scattered abroad. Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof. In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair

of my flesh stood up: It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image *was* before mine eyes, *there was* silence, and I heard a voice, *saying*, Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker? (Job 4:10-17)

Eliphaz made up this story; one would do well to read the entire chapter. We will notice some of the high, rather low, lights. He said a thing was secretly brought to him. His ear received a little of it. It was in thoughts from a vision of the night; he was in a deep sleep. He was afraid and he trembled; all of his bones shook. A spirit passed before his face.

Was he still in a deep sleep when the spirit passed or was he awake? Was he still dreaming or did this happen in reality? If his bones shook, was he in pain? If his ear received only a little, was he sure he heard correctly?

The hairs on his flesh stood up. He could not discern the form, but it was an image standing before his face. There was silence and he heard a voice. Again, we might ask if he can see the form or not. We might wonder if he is asleep or awake, conscious or dreaming. He might explain if he is in a deep sleep, how did he see, feel, or hear anything? How did he see a spirit? One might wonder why all of this was done for him and not Job or anyone else, he explains. All of this was done so he could be asked, "Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his maker?"

Amazingly, that corresponds exactly with Eliphaz and his friend's position about Job. They have been and will continue to tell Job that they are right and he is wrong. He is unrighteous and a sinner, which according to them is why God is punishing him. Humanity would do well not to emulate Eliphaz in making up stories to bolster their position about God. Remember, near the end of the book God spoke and named Eliphaz specifically when He said, "My wrath is kindled against thee and against thy two friends; for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right" (Job 42:7).

Instead of making up stories about his knowledge of God, Job freely admitted his lack of knowledge of God's actions. He could not find him or perceive him. Job did not know where God was working or what he was doing. However, Job reverses this and the point he makes is much more important.

Instead of us talking about the certainty we have of God's actions which we do not know, we should be thrilled about the certainty of God's knowledge of us and our actions. In effect, Job says, I do not know where He is or what He is doing, but I do know that He knows me and what I am doing. Note Job's positive confident statement about God, "He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."

Job trusted God's knowledge of his faithfulness. Job's friend's had made some broad, sweeping accusations about God and Job, namely that Job was a rank sinner. They accused Job of everything from looking at other women to robbing widows and refusing to help the poor. They even accused his children of sinning and for that God had killed them. To add insult to injury, they assured Job he had not gotten what he actually deserved. No wonder Job called them miserable comforters. It is to this no doubt that Job is speaking when he says, "He knows the way that I take," and he was right.

When suffering, our confidence must be in the character of God. The Lord knows the way of the righteous. The Scripture is replete in its declaration of God's knowledge of His faithful children. He knows them that are his (Nah. 1:7). The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous and his ears are open to their prayers (1 Pet. 3:12). The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations (2 Pet. 2:9). God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name (Heb. 6:10). God will never leave us or forsake us (Heb. 13:5). He is absolute in His knowledge of the faithful and nothing that happens in life should ever cause us to doubt Him. Truly, He knows the way we take.

Job Believed God Had His Good In Mind

The second part of verse 10 says, "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." Job believed God was the cause of his suffering.

He spoke of being a target and that God was shooting arrows into him (Job 6:1-4). This is important because of what Job says; note the verse. According to Job, He (God) knew the way Job was taking and when He (God) had tried him, Job would come forth as gold.

Job could not explain to his friends why the things in his life were happening. However, he would not be moved from the fact that in his mind since God was doing it, the thing would be for his good. *To come forth as gold* is a phrase that describes success, wellness, or improvement.

What a wonderful way for Job to view God, and oh, how it must have helped him endure all he went through. God is loving, faithful, just, and good. If He acts it will be good and for the good of man. Job knows this and says it. This is not randomness, this is not happenstance and this is not time and chance. Here is a faithful child of God who believes God has chosen to move against him declaring that if God did it I will be better because of it. Moses told Israel that God gave the law for their good (Deu. 10:12-13).

Since Job had such a spiritual, positive view of God, it enabled him to respond to God faithfully. Because of how Job believed God viewed him in Job 23:10, verses 11 and 12 sum up Job's disposition toward God. He honored God's way, "My foot hath held his steps his way have I kept, and not declined." He obeyed God's commands, "Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips." He valued God's word. "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:11-12). Because Job believed God was doing something for his good, he in turn would continue to be good to God. It was not Job's things that made God worth serving; it was God Himself.

How Can I Come Forth As Gold?

We Need To Be Gold Before The Trials

Job was gold before his trials came. Some mistakenly believe that the trials of Job turned him into gold. This is not true. When gold is mined from the earth, it is already gold. Fire does not turn metals into gold; rather, it removes impurities from gold.

When we open the book of Job, a description is given of the man. As one reads through the book, this description should not be forgotten.

There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name *was* Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil. And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east. And his sons went and feasted *in their* houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. And it was so, when the days of *their* feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings *according* to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually. (Job 1:1-5)

Several things stand out about Job: (1) He walked with God. Job is described as a perfect and upright man. Noah is similarly described (Gen. 6:9). One who is perfect and upright; one who is just, is gold if you will. (2) He honored God. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Pro. 1:7). Job feared God. (3) He loved his family. The greatness of Job is not measured in livestock and beasts. Note his children are listed first and then we are told his substance also was great. (4) Job prayed to God. He thought about the spiritual well-being of his family, and he sacrificed and prayed for them constantly. (5) He valued God. It might be that they have sinned; this was the concern of Job. He did not want the relationship between God and

his family hampered by sin. Job 1:5 ends by telling us, thus did Job continually. Trials do not make us gold; they reveal what kind of metal we are.

How Can I Become Gold?

If it is the case that one must be gold in order to come forth through trials as gold, how can one become gold? The simple answer is one must obey God under whatever law he lives with God. Today, the Law of Christ is what all men are required to follow. Jesus tells us that we must obey His gospel in order to be changed or made new (Mark 16:15-16).

The way to become gold then for our analogy is to obey the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are changed through the process of being saved. We must hear and learn of God (John 6:44-45). We must believe in Jesus (John 8:24). Faith according to Scripture comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17) and without Faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). Those who hear and believe must repent; that is, they must change their mind and manner of life. Jesus states that if we do not repent, we will perish (Luke 13:3-5). When one hears, believes, and repents, he must confess the name of Jesus (Rom. 10:9-10). Christianity is not a private or secret religion; it is public profession of a life being given to God. We confess Him and He will confess us (Mat. 10:32-33). Finally, in order to be changed, one must submit to being immersed in water for the remission of sins. This is what the first hearers of the gospel were told (Acts 2:37-38). It fittingly emulates our Savior's death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-4). Paul also refers to it as the operation of God (Col. 2:12). By being in Christ, one becomes a new creature or creation (2 Cor. 5:17). In baptism our sins are forgiven; we are added to the body of Christ (Gal. 3:27). We are saved (1 Pet. 3:21) and our consciences are cleared.

We Must Grow So We Can Glow

When gold is purified, the dross is removed and the metal shines through. The refiner does not make the gold; he removes impurities from the gold. The Scriptural equivalent is growing in the grace and

knowledge of our Lord (2 Pet. 3:18). Or as Paul states, we must be sanctified, so we can become meet for the master's use.

For this is the will of God, *even* your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: That no *man* go beyond and defraud his brother in *any* matter: because that the Lord *is* the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. (1 The. 4:3-7)

He also said something very similar to Timothy.

Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, *and* prepared unto every good work. Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (2 Tim. 2:19-22)

In both passages, the individuals had been saved; thus in some sense they were sanctified or set apart (1 Cor. 1:2). However, Paul addresses the need to continue to grow or mature. God has called

us to holiness because we are saved. If a man will purge himself, he will be a vessel of honor sanctified and meet for the master's use. This is said to a faithful gospel preacher. Coming through trials and shining forth like gold is the result of already being in the process of refining one's self. We would all do well to heed the exhortation, to examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith. We should all prove ourselves to know whether Christ is in us lest we are shown to be reprobate (2 Cor. 13:5).

How Can I Have A Marriage Of Gold?

If you are a husband, learn your wife. First Peter 3:7 teaches husbands to dwell with them according to knowledge. A golden marriage contains a husband who knows his wife. He knows her through investigation; he asks her questions; he seeks to know her thoughts, her feelings, her concerns and fears. He is present and involved in the marriage not distant and cold. Often, when we endure trials, we are surprised about what we learn of our spouses. This can be avoided if we learn them before the trials come.

Another thing Peter says is for husbands to honor their wives. Golden marriages have husbands who esteem their wives. Every husband should ask himself, does my wife feel honored? Do you honor them by how you speak to them? Do you honor them by how you speak about them? Do you honor them by the way you treat them? Honor is not something you say; it is something you do. God knew whether or not he was honored by the actions of Israel not their word. Listen:

A son honoureth *his* father, and a servant
his master: if then I *be* a father, where *is* mine
honour? and if I *be* a master, where *is* my fear?
saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests,
that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein
have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted
bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein

have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD *is* contemptible. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, *is it* not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, *is it* not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts. (Mal. 1:6-8)

Husbands must honor their wives. Then when the trials of life come, both will come through them stronger and better than they went in. Still another thing Peter says is to treat them like a Christian. Wives who are Christians are fellow-heirs of the grace of life. She is a child of God. We must not treat sisters in Christ better than we do our wives who are also sisters in Christ. Do you treat other Christians the way you treat your wife? Lastly, Peter says to listen to God.

Job was gold because he trusted and obeyed God. Inspiration is clear that if husbands and wives disobey God, their prayers will be hindered or cut off. Many do not realize they have not received an answer to their prayer because their prayer never made it to God. Peter's words get very close to another stern warning from God. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer *shall be* abomination" (Pro. 28:9).

Before addressing husbands in verse 7, Peter addressed wives in 1 Peter 3:1-6. To wives, Peter said they must subject themselves to their husbands. No husband ever subjects his wife; she subjects herself voluntarily or not at all. Wives, to build a marriage of gold, you must submit yourself to your own husband. Submission must be demonstrated.

Peter addresses her life; he refers to her chaste conversation. He also speaks of her spirit. She places more emphasis on the spiritual than the physical. She adorns, arranges her inner woman more than she focuses on her outer woman.

She obeys her husband. The Bible is clear: Husbands, love your wife; husbands, honor your wife. Wives, reverence your husbands; wives, obey your husbands (Eph. 5:33). Wives, do you obey your

husbands (Tit. 2:5)? Wives, do you reverence your husbands?

Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. This is both obedience and reverence. Until husbands and wives are willing to do what God says in the way he said it, we will not have marriages of gold. As such, when the trials of life come, we will continue to turn on each other, and turn away from God. We will lament the trials of life. Cry out to God for help. Complain about all that is happening to us. Charge God with wrong doing and consider given up on our marriages and our faith.

The trial is not the problem; the marriage is the problem. The trial is simply exposing the metal of the marriage. Thus, the real problem is the metal of our marriage before the trials of life come. The wise man first built his house upon the Rock; then when the rain, flood, and wind came, his house stood (Mat. 7:24-28). The storm beat on the house as it was; it stood because it was founded on the Rock. To use Job's expression, the house came through the storm as gold because it was already solidly built on the Rock.

Conclusion

Job came forth as gold because he had already given his life to God. When the trials came, he was purged. This is the simple solution to coming through life's trials. Job suffered the loss of money, children, and his health. He came out of his trials like gold because he was gold before he went in. He had a scriptural view of God. He believed God would listen to him and help him. He knew God knew him; thus, he was confident in his life. He continued to serve God faithfully—before, during, and after the trials.

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CHAPTER 16

Words Will Never Hurt Me: Exposing The Myth That Words Don't Hurt

James Eaves

We are all familiar with many children's retorts such as "I'm rubber. You're glue. Whatever you say bounces off of me and sticks to you" and "I know you are, but what am I." One of my personal favorites is "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." This little rhyme is often taught to children as a way of dealing with bullies. I can remember using this approach myself as a child, but looking back on it now, I realize how completely wrong the individual who devised this rhyme was. I can still remember many of the hurtful things that were said to me as a child by bullies. I remember those words because words hurt. They have lasting effects on us that we likely do not realize at the time.

"The tongue is a fire" (New King James Version, Jam. 3:6) and is capable of doing irreparable damage. I have occasionally heard someone say that they have tough skin and what they mean by this is that hurtful words that others say do not really bother them. Yet, they have no trouble remembering all of those hurtful things that were said and recounting them to others. On the other hand, we have those who ascribe to the idea that we should not have to "tiptoe around" other people's feelings if what we are saying is true. These individuals see no need to employ any kind of tact in their speech to others. Any student of the Scriptures should immediately be able to see the fallacy in both of these lines of thought.

Job is a prime example of one who experienced the damage that words can do to a person. After losing so much, Job found himself at a very low point in his life. His wife had recently told him to “curse God and die!” (Job 2:9). He was in terrible pain on the inside (Job 1:20) and the outside (Job 2:7). Job was in desperate need of comfort when his friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar arrived.

And when they raised their eyes from afar,
and did not recognize him, they lifted their
voices and wept; and each one tore his robe and
sprinkled dust on his head toward heaven. So
they sat down with him on the ground seven
days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word
to him, for they saw that his grief was very great.
(Job 2:12-13)

For seven days his friends comforted him with their presence. Regrettably, for Job, this would be the end of the comfort that he would receive from them. Job's expectations of comforting words and support from his friends would fall miserably short. The most comforting thing that Job's friends would say to him was nothing at all! In the words of W.T. Hamilton, “A friend's insult can be the unkindest of them all” (42).

The purpose of this manuscript is to expose the myth that words do not hurt. As we look to the life of Job to seek the truths regarding this matter, we will see the great destructive power of words. Then we will endeavor to learn how Job was able to cope with the awful things his so-called friends said to him. Finally, we will answer the question, how does God expect us to use our words?

Words Hurt!

“Sticks and stones may break my bones...but words can break my heart” may be a more accurate statement than “words will never hurt me.” If it is the case that words cannot hurt us, then Job was not aware of this fact. “How long will you torment my soul, And break

me in pieces with words? These ten times you have reproached me; You are not ashamed that you have wronged me” (Job 19:2-3). As a matter of fact, I believe that as we look through God’s Word and especially in the book of Job, we will see that words can hurt us mentally, physically, and spiritually. Let us consider the way words can hurt us as we look at those destructive words spoken to Job by his friends and the way in which he responds to them.

Eliphaz the Temanite

The ways in which Job’s friends dealt him serious harm are abundant. As we seek to expose this myth that “Words Don’t Hurt” let us begin by examining those accusations made by Eliphaz and then note Job’s response. Eliphaz actually begins more delicately than the other two friends when he poses the question, “If one attempts a word with you, will you become weary?” (Job 4:2a). In other words, Eliphaz is saying, “If I speak to you about this, will it be too much of a burden for you?” He spends the bulk of chapter four arguing that the entire calamity brought upon Job was a result of sin in Job’s life.

Remember now, who ever perished being
innocent? Or where were the upright ever cut
off? Even as I have seen, Those who plow iniquity
And sow trouble reap the same. By the blast of
God they perish, And by the breath of His anger
they are consumed. (Job 4:7-9)

He goes on in chapter five to try to convince Job to give up the foolish idea of declaring before God that he is innocent. We read in verse 2, “For wrath kills a foolish man, And envy slays a simple one” (Job 5:2). Eliphaz believed that God was chastening Job for some sin in his life (Job 5:17). With this belief in mind, he continued his attempt to get Job to repent.

After his friends had sat with him mourning for seven days Job surely must have thought, “Finally, I will receive some small comfort from their words,” but reality was quite different. Now he faced down his friends, after having lost everything but his faith, as they falsely

accuse him of sins that he had not committed. After having heard Eliphaz's first round of hurtful words, we can see a glimpse of the effect that they had on Job.

To him who is afflicted, kindness should be
shown by his friend, Even though he forsakes
the fear of the Almighty. My brothers have dealt
deceitfully like a brook, Like the streams of the
brooks that pass away, Which are dark because
of the ice, And into which the snow vanishes.
(Job 6:14-16)

The picture here is that of a thirsty man who has found a stream and as he approaches it, all of the water drains away. Job was in desperate need of comfort and he saw it approaching on the horizon, but then it was gone. Again in chapter 15, we find Eliphaz accusing Job of basically being "full of hot air." "Should a wise man answer with empty knowledge, And fill himself with the east wind" (Job 15:2)? The assault of poisonous words continued to deal Job a mighty blow. The reaction to this mental and physical anguish through which Job was suffering poured forth from his lips in response to Eliphaz in chapter sixteen.

Then Job answered and said: "I have heard
many such things; Miserable comforters are you
all! Shall words of wind have an end? Or what
provokes you that you answer? I also could speak
as you do, If your soul were in my soul's place. I
could heap up words against you, And shake my
head at you; But I would strengthen you with my
mouth, And the comfort of my lips would relieve
your grief." (Job 16:1-5)

Job wanted his friends to know that if the roles were reversed he would be comforting them and relieving their grief, not causing more.

The extent of the damage that the words of Eliphaz inflicted upon Job cannot be seen with the human eye. While Eliphaz, at first, seemed to use some tact in his confronting Job with what he believed to be facts, later on in his statements he very bluntly accuses Job of wickedness (Job 22:5). Remember, that the only evidence of sin, foolishness, or wickedness that Eliphaz had against Job was that he was seemingly being punished by God. He believed so strongly in his false doctrine, which Job declared as foolishness to his wife (Job 2:10), that he was willing to assume that his friend had committed these atrocities. There is obviously a lesson here for us. One should never jump to conclusions without the evidence.

Bildad the Shuhite

Unfortunately for Job, he had more than one friend. While Eliphaz displayed some form of tact, Bildad did not. He wanted to know how long Job was going to continue foolishly questioning God (Job 8:2). Adam Clarke wrote regarding the latter part of the verse that a more literal rendering would be “Wilt thou continue to breathe forth a tempest of words?” Bildad compared Job’s complaints to a storm, giving us a picture of the passion with which Job must have expressed his suffering.

What kinds of friends would make accusations like these with the only proof being their opinions? “If you were pure and upright, Surely now He would awake for you, And prosper your rightful dwelling place” (Job 8:6). By the time Bildad was allowed his second turn to speak to Job, he seemed to be frustrated for he said, “How long till you put an end to words? Gain understanding, and afterward we will speak” (Job 18:2). It is as though he believed that he could see something that Job just could not see. He finished his speech with yet another insulting remark. Here in the last verse of chapter eighteen, Bildad, accused Job of losing all that he had (family, servants, animals, etc.) because he was wicked and did not know God (Job 18:5-21). Imagine the pain that these comments must have inflicted. Bildad had just blamed Job for the death of his children. If this man was a true friend, he would know the real faith, goodness, and righteousness of Job.

Zophar the Naamathite

Of the three friends of Job, Zophar speaks some of the most injurious words to Job. Believing that Job had done something to merit the calamities heaped upon him, Zophar's tongue lashes out with words that are hard to imagine coming from the mouth of a supposed friend.

Then Zophar the Naamathite answered and said:
Should not the multitude of words be answered?
And should a man full of talk be vindicated?
Should your empty talk make men hold their
peace? And when you mock, should no one
rebuke you? For you have said, 'My doctrine is
pure, And I am clean in your eyes.' But oh, that
God would speak, And open His lips against
you, That He would show you the secrets of
wisdom! For they would double your prudence.
Know therefore that God exacts from you Less
than your iniquity deserves. (Job 11:1-6)

In other words, Zophar believed that Job deserved the punishment that he received and more. Had these words come from an enemy, they likely would not have affected Job in the same way, but this was supposed to be a friend. We expect our friends to "love at all times" (Pro. 17:17) and to "stick closer than a brother" (Pro. 18:24), but it seems that Job had no such friends.

When Zophar came to the end of his first speech, he voiced words that seemed to agree with Job's wife in that he said that Job's only "hope [was] Loss of life!" (Job 11:20). Can you imagine a friend telling you that your only hope was to die? These men were indeed pitiful excuses for friends, but Zophar was not finished yet. He would spend the entirety of his final speech to Job explaining to him the end of wicked hypocrites. "That the triumphing of the wicked is short, And the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment?" (Job 20:5). It is truly heartbreaking to witness the lack of "gentleness"

(Gal. 6:1) shown by all of these men as they attempted, in their minds, to restore Job.

After being interrupted, it seemed, by Zophar, Job asked that his friends give him time to speak and when he was finished, they could continue their assault. “Listen carefully to my speech, And let this be your consolation. Bear with me that I may speak, And after I have spoken, keep mocking” (Job 21:2-3). The proof given by his friends is the main focus of chapter twenty-one. Numerous times they upheld his suffering and loss as evidence that he was not right with God. In their arguments, they proclaimed that the wicked do not prosper (Job 20:5), but Job rebutted them soundly. “Why do the wicked live and become old, Yes, become mighty in power? Their descendants are established with them in their sight, And their offspring before their eyes. Their houses are safe from fear, Neither is the rod of God upon them” (Job 21:7-9). It was clear to Job that Zophar did not know what he was talking about and he said as much in the final verse of this chapter. “How then can you comfort me with empty words, Since falsehood remains in your answers?” (Job 21:34). Barnes comments regarding this verse:

That is, how can you be qualified to give me consolation in my trials, who have such erroneous views of the government and dealings of God? True consolation could be founded only on correct views of the divine government; but such views, Job says, they had not. With their conceptions of the divine administration, they could not administer to him any real consolation.

This reminds me very much of that individual, while meaning well, who will say to that person who is in the pit of despair and grief over some great loss in their life, “I know how you feel.” No one can truly know exactly how another person feels even if we’ve gone through the same type of loss. In the case of Eliphaz, Bildad, and

Zophar, they were trying to teach Job the path to salvation (Job 5:17) when all they had was error.

In the end, the words of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar not only damaged Job, but it also damaged them. When we get to the end of the book and God proclaimed Job's righteousness, He also condemned the folly of Eliphaz and his two friends.

And so it was, after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has. Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you. For I will accept him, lest I deal with you according to your folly; because you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has. (Job 42:7-8)

Their souls were placed in danger because of the words that they had spoken. They had given their opinions in place of facts hoping to save Job from his error, but if Job had listened to them, he would have been no better off than they. How often is it the case that those who think highly of their opinions speak them to others as if they were Biblical truths? We would do well to remember that it is Truth that sets men free from sin and not our opinions (John 8:32). Be careful of words for they can easily deceive us, distract us, and even damn our souls (Gen. 3:1-6).

How To Cope With Hurtful Words

Job's Example

After seeing the injurious nature that words can have on ourselves and others, now is a good time to answer the question, How do I cope with these hurtful words? We will begin by observing

how Job was able to be so thoroughly abused verbally and be able to move on. Then we will note some other Biblical examples and finish by applying these Biblical truths to our lives.

First, how was Job able to cope with the onslaught of poisonous words? I know that you may be thinking to yourself at this time, Was it really all that bad? They were just words. The man lost his children after all. But let us not forget that these men accused Job of not knowing God (Job 18:21). In effect, they were saying that his relationship with God was dead! They were attacking the most important thing in this man, or anyone's, life!

So, how did Job do it? He decided early on that he would not allow any trial, whether physical loss or verbal attack, to change who he was. Who was Job? He was a righteous man who would allow no room for wickedness or deceit in his life. He would die long before he would put away his integrity.

As God lives, who has taken away my justice,
And the Almighty, who has made my soul bitter,
As long as my breath is in me, And the breath
of God in my nostrils, My lips will not speak
wickedness, Nor my tongue utter deceit. Far be
it from me That I should say you are right; Till I
die I will not put away my integrity from me. My
righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go;
My heart shall not reproach me as long as I live.
(Job 27:2-6)

He saw the worth of integrity, honesty, and faithfulness. Job was also able to make it through all of this because he knew he was innocent and recognized that God was his salvation. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. Even so, I will defend my own ways before Him. He also shall be my salvation, For a hypocrite could not come before Him" (Job 13:15-16). Job knew that he was right with God. This knowledge could only come from understanding the will of God, which God Himself said that Job did (Job 42:7-8).

Other Biblical Examples

The Word of God is replete with Scriptures that teach us how to cope with trials of all types, which would include hurtful words. When trials came his way, the psalmist was thankful for the Word of the Lord. “Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word” (Psa. 119:67). He viewed these trials as an opportunity to learn and grow (Psa. 119:71). James put it this way, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience” (Jam. 1:2-3).

Another important point to remember here is one expressed by the apostle Peter in 1 Peter 5:7. “Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” The burden of hurtful words can build up like a mountain if we are unwilling to allow our Lord to carry it for us. One author wrote, “God gives us strength to bear our present burden, but he never calculated that we would carry over yesterday’s grief and borrow on tomorrow’s worry” (Hamilton 22).

A final note that we can make here is that God cares (1 Peter 5:7). As Jesus sent out the twelve, He encouraged them, regarding the trials that they would face, with these words,

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. (Mat. 10:28-31)

Applications

What should I do if I am faced with hurtful words? First, we should give it to God; otherwise we are lugging around burdens we do not need to carry (1 Pet. 5:7). Second, we can evaluate the words by asking a few questions. (1) Does this person mean well? If not,

then I should do my best to completely disregard the comment. (2) Are the things that they said true? It may be that the words that hurt our feelings were actually words of constructive criticism. Sometimes we misinterpret what people say. Let us not be quick to jump to conclusions.

How do I deal with hurtful words regarding my relationship with God? What if someone tells me, like Job's friends, that I do not know God? How do I respond to this? Do I crawl up in a corner somewhere and feel sorry for myself? No, of course not. We should follow Job's example here. The answer is to know the Will of God (Eph. 5:17). If I know God's Word and study it daily, then these types of comments will have little effect upon us (2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Pet. 3:15).

What Does God Expect Of My Words?

Job's Example

If you recall, in the beginning I mentioned that individual who believed that as long as he spoke the truth, he did not need to be tactful in his words. Recognizing the damage that words can do to a person should be sufficient evidence to prove that idea false, but for the sake of those who are not convinced, let us look at Job's example.

There is a vast difference between the way that Job spoke and the way that his friends did. Job quickly let his friends know that if he were in their place, he would be comforting them not grieving them (Job 16:1-5). While Job's friends continued to preach to him their opinions and traditions (Job 20:4) in an attempt to get him repent of his supposed wickedness, Job rebutted their false arguments (Job 21:7-9). In the end, Job was blessed because he used his words for good (Job 42:7-8). His friends, on the other hand, had put their souls in jeopardy because they had spoken out of ignorance.

Other Biblical Examples

It is easy to see, from other Biblical examples, that God cares greatly how we use our words. Our words can be sinful or they can be wise (Pro. 10:19). With our mouths we can speak words of righteousness or words of wickedness (Pro. 10:31-32). James spent

the better part of chapter three writing about the destructive power of the tongue and our need to take care with it (Jam. 3:1-10). The apostle Paul mentions the need to be gentle in our attempts to restore wayward brethren (Gal. 6:1). In his letter to the Colossians he said that their speech should “always *be* with grace, seasoned with salt” (Col. 4:6). That is to say, that our conversations with others should be palatable especially when discussing God’s Word.

Furthermore, probably the most obvious way in which God expects us to use our words is to save souls. It is the Christian’s responsibility to preach the soul-saving message to the lost (Mat. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). If we withhold our words, how will anyone know that the Son of God died for them (Rom. 10:14)? How will they know what God expects of them if we do not use our mouths to “preach the Word” (2 Tim. 4:2)? Our tongues should edify and encourage (1 Cor. 14:5; 1 The. 5:11) not start fires that burn down those around us (Jam. 3:5).

Applications

How are you using your words? Are you using your tongue “to stir up love and good works” (Heb. 10:24)? Or have your words been used to cause someone to be “swallowed up with too much sorrow” (2 Cor. 2:7)? And of course, let us not forget that principle we learned from Job’s friends. Our hurtful words do not just hurt others. They hurt us as well. When we use our words to tear others down, we find ourselves in a very dangerous category of people (Rom. 1:28-32).

There can be no doubt that words do indeed hurt, but they can also be a beautiful gift. Facing the hurtful words that others may fling our way can be difficult, but completely conquerable with Christ. The words that we speak to one another can be a blessing of encouragement (1 The. 5:11) or a deadly poison of discouragement (Jam. 3:8). Friends, let us hold ourselves accountable for our words, for God surely will.

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CHAPTER 17

The Questions Of The Creator: What Job Learned About The Creation

Charles Pugh III

The Bible is the book of answers. Its 1,189 chapters contain *the* right answers to all crucial moral and religious questions. When properly handled, the information in the answers the Bible provides is evidence of the divine origin of the Bible. However, the Bible is also the book of questions. Its 1,189 chapters contain the most crucial questions the human mind needs to consider. There is the sense in which the very questions stated explicitly or implicitly in the Bible, when properly handled, prove the Bible to be the Word of God. For example, the Biblical questions asked and answered by Jesus Christ prove Him to be the Master Teacher and the Son of God (New King James Version; cf. Mat. 7:28-29; Luke 4:22; Luke 19:47-48; Luke 20:26; Luke 20:39-40; John 7:14-16; John 7:46; John 10:19-21, et al).

In addition to the information provided in the questions and answers of Jesus Christ that implies both the Bible's divine origin and His deity, there is also information in numerous other Biblical references that contain crucial questions, which imply the Bible's divine origin. The assignment before us in this lecture involves the consideration of one of these major Biblical references—Job 38-41.

G. Campbell Morgan called Job 38-41 the “matchless part of the book” of Job (*Unfolding* 222). And it is “matchless” because of the matchless questions that compose these chapters. There are one hundred twenty-nine verses in these four chapters. Henry

Morris said, “[W]e can count about seventy-seven questions” in the chapters (*Remarkable* 98). Swindoll concurs with this same number of questions (267). In his older work on Job, Wayne Jackson suggests these chapters contain “a series of more than seventy, rapid-fire questions” (*The Book* 79). In more recent material, Jackson says there are “roughly sixty” questions (“Life’s” 144). Roy Deaver listed thirty-nine questions in chapters thirty-eight and thirty-nine (311-13).

The significance of these four chapters rests ultimately, not in the number of questions recorded, but in the nature of these questions. C. S. Lewis once said that “half the questions we [humans] ask—half [of] our great theological and metaphysical problems” are “nonsense questions” (81). However, the questions asked by God in Job 38-41 are not “nonsense questions.” They are “scientific accuracy questions” (Pugh 6). Hailey is correct when he says, “These questions are of such a nature, and manifest an understanding of the universe so far above man’s knowledge and wisdom of the day, that they offer irrefutable evidence that God the Creator was the speaker” (*Commentary* 331).

Jackson well summarizes the continued relevancy and challenging nature of these questions:

Jehovah asks the patriarch a series of questions about the mystery, power, and beneficence of the universe. The queries are designed to show how very little man knows about the things of God’s world. Though the language style is poetic, it is amazing how scientifically precise it is as we are able to compare our modern knowledge with the information of this portion of scripture. We are forced to say, however, that even though our knowledge has increased tremendously since the days of Job, we are far from fathoming the great mysteries posed there. (*The Book* 126)

With the preceding introductory thoughts before us, I now proceed to look at these four chapters in light of the theme—“A

Conversation with the Creator and the Incredible Insights It Provided.” I will address these four chapters (Job 38-41) with the following areas serving as the basis for my observations: (1) Contextual Considerations, (2) Interrogational Summation, and (3) Practical Application.

Contextual Considerations

Not only is it the case that the four chapters before us (Job 38-41) are about the crucial questions that God asked Job, but there is the sense in which all of this ancient book of Job is set in the context of great questions. The outstanding questions raised and answered in the book of Job include the following:

- How can God be both good and just while allowing a righteous man (such as Job) to suffer so terribly?
- Is there such a thing as sincere, disinterested piety or is it the case that only when righteousness is profitable in a material sense that it is displayed (in which case, it is not righteousness but hypocrisy)?
- Can one know that there is good reason for what happens in the world?
- Would God be unrighteous if He allowed the righteous to suffer?
- Is there any man who would remain faithful to God if he lost everything?
- Is God to be arraigned before the bar of human reason?
- Is all suffering the consequence of sin?
- What is God’s solution to this problem?

With words that compose no less than fifteen chapters, Job’s friends had attempted to answer these questions. They failed. Just before the text states, “The words of Job are ended” (Job 31:40), Job had cried, “Oh, that I had one to hear me!...Oh, that the Almighty would answer me, That my Prosecutor had written a book!” (Job 31:35). Earlier Job had requested that God would call, and he (Job)

would answer, or that he (Job) would speak, and God would answer (Job 13:22). John Frame sets the context: “Job...had asked for an interview with God, in which he could demand an answer...why God had allowed him to suffer...[W]hen God did appear, it was God who asked the questions and brought accusations” (88).

“The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said...Now prepare yourself like a man: I will question you, and you shall answer Me” (Job 38:1; Job 38:3). God spoke. He answered, but He did not answer—He questioned. Job would answer; But Job answered very little. Out of the total of one hundred twenty-nine verses in the four chapters (38-41), there are a mere two verses that contain all that Job said (Job 40:4-5). [Note: Job did respond a second time (Job 42:1-6) after God had completed His interrogation. However, this was not to vindicate himself but to acknowledge God, repent, and submit to the Almighty.] Job’s plea for God to speak was granted. But God’s solution to the problem was not as Job (or anyone of us) might expect.

The almighty Creator, clad in the glory and the terror of the universe, more majestic and awful than Job had ever anticipated, speaks out of the thunderstorm. Clouds and darkness are still round about Him, and His speech seems at first as remarkable for what it leaves unsaid as for what it contains...He does not shed a single ray of light upon the mystery of his [Job’s] sufferings, neither praising him for his supreme patience under the shocks of calamity, nor confiding to him how [H]e has convinced the sons of Elohim that men can serve God unselfishly...He does not lift the veil which hangs over the gates of death, nor promise that the enigmas of the present will be solved...In truth, He scarcely touches the problem which Job and his friends have been so passionately debating. (Smith 345)

What does happen is the revelation of God's "absolute awe-inspiring greatness and judicial grandeur" (Delitzsch 312) through a divine interrogation that entails "question after question, all reflecting [God's] role as the creator and sovereign Lord of the cosmos. And with question after question [H]e prods Job to reflect on his own limitations" (Hicks 173).

Interrogational Summation

Due to the limitations of this assignment, it is not possible to give a detailed consideration of each one of the hundred twenty-nine verses contained in the relevant chapters (38-41). Therefore, my methodology will be to provide a summation of the divine interrogation of Job by providing a basic representation of the questions asked by God.

The interrogation of Job by God can be divided into two basic sets of questions. The first set asked by God to Job is contained in Job 38:4-39:30 and involves (1) the inanimate creation (Job 38:4-38) and (2) the animate creation (Job 38:39-39:30). Henry Morris presents an excellent summary of these two sets of questions:

[E]ight verses deal with the early history of the earth, twenty-seven with the physical world as it functions today, and thirty-three verses with the nature and needs of the animals (not including the behemoth and the leviathan, which are treated in more detail...[in the second set of questions, chapters forty and forty-one]). All of these are a part of God's creation, giving clear testimony of his omniscience and omnipotence, his providential care [omnibenevolence] for all his creatures. (*Remarkable* 108)

Inanimate Creation

Origins

The questions concerning these inanimate aspects of creation begin with the origin of all things (cf. Gen. 1:1; Job 38:4). This is why

Smith says, “[O]nly in this discourse of Jehovah...[w]ill one find so detailed a panorama of natural ways or so eloquent a portrayal of her mystery for man. ***It is an inspired commentary on the first chapter of Genesis***” (qtd. in Smith 345, emp. added).

The very first question God addressed to Job (Job 38:4) implies a fundamental truth concerning origins (i.e., the origin of the universe and humans). This crucial truth is that “since no human being was present to observe the origin of the universe, origin of first life and/or origin of new life forms, there is no possible way to scientifically examine or explain such events. They cannot be tested” (Sztanyo 3). Origin questions are philosophical and/or revelational in nature. God asked, “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth...To what were its foundations fastened...?” (Job 38:4; Job 38:6). Job was not there at the beginning (nor was any other human). Therefore, to receive detailed answers to these kinds of questions, one must have revelation from one who was there, and/or synthesize information from various disciplines to determine what occurred. However, such synthesis is not, strictly speaking, a function of natural science, but it is philosophy.¹ In this first set of questions (Job 38:4-38), Job is challenged concerning the origin of the Earth; the stars; power, control, and depth of the sea; death; light, darkness, snow, hail, rain, and ice; and even the constellations.

Oceans

Concerning the sea, God asked, “Have you entered the springs of the sea? Or have you walked in search of the depths?” (Job 38:16). *Depths* is translated “recesses of the deep” in the English Standard Version (2001). Dubach and Taber say:

The sea bottom is divided into three distinct areas: the continental shelf, the continental slope, and the ocean floor.

The continental shelf has numerous hills, ridges, terraces, and even canyons comparable to the Grand Canyon. The average width of

the shelf is 30 miles, but it may extend several hundred miles from shore.

Many mountains under the sea are higher than Mt. Everest [29,000 ft.]. All oceans except the North Pacific are divided by an almost continuous system of mountains, the largest being the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. (23)

The depth of the sea is profound. The deepest known point in the oceans is 36,198 feet in the Mariana Trench in the western Pacific Ocean (Museum of Science). Although the science of oceanography confirms the reality of awesome canyons, recesses, or mountain ranges of the oceans, even yet our knowledge of the oceans is extremely limited. Printed in 1969, Dubach and Taber's work published by the U. S. Naval Oceanographic Office is still accurate in its claim that no more than "five-percent of the world's ocean floor has been charted" (99; cf. National Ocean Service).

Snow

There are powerful questions posed by God concerning the elements of snow and rain respectively. "The secrets of snow and hail, of the distribution of light and wind, of rain and lightning, dew and ice, are demanded of the man who had assumed to judge and censure the ways of God mainly because he could not comprehend them" (Smith 347). God asked Job: "Have you entered the treasury of snow, Or have you seen the treasury of hail, Which I have reserved for the time of trouble, For the day of battle and war?" (Job 38:22-23). The Bible contains twenty-five references to snow. Interestingly, the book of Job, which may be the oldest book in the Bible, contains more references to snow, ice, and frost than any other Biblical book. This is certainly significant in light of the fact that Job's homeland was in what is now essentially a desert area. Morris wrote,

There are even hints of the post-flood Ice Age scattered throughout the Book of Job. When

the thermal water vapor blanket...rained on the earth during the flood, the greenhouse environment dissipated. Snow began to fall in the polar latitude and eventually great ice sheets fanned out over the northern regions...The ice sheets did not extend into Bible lands, but they undoubtedly affect their climates, producing much more rain, snow, and ice than occur today in those regions. (*Remarkable* 30)

In a more recent work the same author adds,

The snow is a treasure...The winter's snow pack in the mountains is often called "white gold," because of its indispensable water storage capacity, released in the melting season each spring to provide life to teeming cities and irrigation in the desert for needed food supplies. The snow also aids in maintaining the planet's chemical cycles by returning various elements in the nuclei of its flakes back from the ocean to the lands from which they were leached and transported by rivers to the ocean. When the snowpack becomes a glacier, it can greatly assist in the breakup of rocks to form fertile soils. (*Heavens* 215)

In his book, *The Wonder of the World*, Roy Abraham Varghese proposes a list of one hundred "wonders of the world." He defines a wonder as "any phenomenon or hard fact that intrigues or awe-inspires" (397). The thirty-sixth wonder on Varghese's list is *snowflakes*. He explains,

We're captivated by the somber silence of snowfall, the majesty of snow-capped mountain

peaks. But the microstructure of snow is no less fascinating than its macro-manifestations. Every snow crystal is hexagonal but within this basic six-sided shape there are endless intricate ...combinations so that virtually every flake is unique. A collision of atmospheric dust particles and droplets of water gives us a spectacle that is as structurally ingenious as it is esthetically elegant! The three most striking things about snow are its origin, its magnificence and its transience. What is the return on investment on such a colossal production? Is there some underlying beauty about reality that has to constantly manifest itself? (405)

Rain

God also interrogated Job concerning the rain:

Who has divided a channel for the overflowing water, Or a path for the thunderbolt. To cause it to rain on a land where there is no one. A wilderness in which there is no man; To satisfy the desolate waste, And cause to spring forth the growth of tender grass? Has the rain a father? Or who has begotten the drops of dew?...Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, that an abundance of water may cover you?...Who can number the clouds by wisdom? Or who can pour out the bottles of heaven, when the dust hardens in clumps, and the clods cling together? (Job 38:25-28; Job 38:34, Job 38:37-38)

The existence of rain is a marvelous wonder manifesting “an arrangement which no chance could have produced” (Duncan 30). Paul affirmed that the rain is one of the details within the volume

of General Revelation that implies the existence of the true God and His goodness. He said, “He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven” (Acts 14:17).

[I]t is a big assignment to water the earth and to keep on watering it day after day and year after year. Multiplied millions of tons of water must be lifted from the oceans, suspended in the atmosphere, blown over the dry land and then dropped as rain in such a manner that it will not injure the soil and vegetation.

[W]hen it's time to rain, electrical impulses flash through the atmosphere causing the moisture to gather into small drops which patter down upon the thirsty land in such a gentle way that there is no harm done. This is such a natural thing and happens so frequently that we fail to realize its tremendous significance.

Law after law and principle after principle are bound up in the complex structure of our rainfall, teaching us unmistakably over and over again of the good hand of our God in His gracious provisions for our needs! (Orr 24)

Space

In the set of questions concerning the inanimate creation (Job 38:4-38), God also took Job on a brief, but challenging journey into space. He asked:

Can you bind the cluster of the Pleiades, or loose the belt of Orion? Can you bring out Mazzaroth in its season? Or can you guide the Great Bear

[Arcturus] with its claws? Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you set their dominion over the [E]arth? (Job 38:31-33)

Biblical revelation challenges humans to give thought to the implications of the existence of the starry skies above (cf. Psalms 19:1ff). God challenged Israel to give deep thought to what is seen with the naked eye in the grand observatory that He operates:

Lift up your eyes on high, And see who has created these things, Who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, By the greatness of His might And the strength of His power; Not one is missing. (Isaiah 40:26)

Not only did God create the stars, but He arranged them in star groupings (constellations) “for signs and seasons, and for days and years” (Genesis 1:14). The book of Job contains more references to the constellations than are found in any other part of the Sacred Scriptures. The Pleiades is a cluster of hundreds of stars that appear in the Spring. Its “seven sisters” are the brightest members of the cluster (Steidl 133). Orion is a constellation of stars visible in late October and contain a star that is estimated to be 250 times larger than the diameter of the Sun. The awesomeness of this is realized when one considers the diameter of the Sun is approximately 865,000 miles, which makes the Sun 109 times larger than Earth. Approximately 1,300,000 Earths could fit inside the Sun (Enchanted Learning)! And one of the great stars in Orion is 250 times larger than the sun’s diameter! Job was in way over his head as he was challenged by these profound questions. And, even yet today, in this age of great technology and scientific advancement, these questions continue to evidence their divine origin. In an old (1874) work on *The Astronomy of the Bible*, the argument implied by God’s questions to Job is still seen to maintain its soundness in our contemporary world.

If we admit...that the Book of Job was composed in an age of the world when all were ignorant of the true system of the universe, and if within its compass we should find a series of astronomical inquiries, professedly selected and put to overwhelm the human mind, in case these same inquiries, at this day and in the full blaze of science, and with all our knowledge of the system of nature, should be equally overwhelming, we should in reason acknowledge that they could not have been propounded by human ignorance, and must have proceeded, as is professed, from the mouth of Him who built the universe, and to whom all secrets were open as the face of day. (Mitchell 219-20)

Animate Creation

The first set of questions concludes with God's challenge to Job concerning the animate creation (Job 38:39-39:30). It is a study in Zoology (i.e., animal life). Man can learn from the animals great lessons concerning what life is all about. Earlier Job had said, "[A]sk the beasts, and they will teach you; And the birds of the air...will tell you...and the fish of the sea will explain to you" (Job 12:7-8). Job's words about the value of the animal world to teach life lessons now return to him. Warren addressed this great value when he wrote:

[T]he existence of animals in the world affords God a medium of teaching various spiritual truths to man. This is done by statements in the Bible and by man's careful observation of and thought about animals. The Bible contains many references to animals of various kinds which make it clear that God expects man to learn profound moral and spiritual lessons from animals. (*Atheists* 65-66)

There are nearly 3,000 mentions of animals in the Bible with about 150 animal names referenced (Cansdale 11, 13). Morris observes that God's questions to Job in this section involve twelve animals and "all the other animals can be included in his expressed concern for these twelve representative animals" (*Remarkable* 107). The questions are designed to imply God's omniscience, omnipotence, and omnibenevolence as over against Job's limitations in knowledge, power, and care.

God asks if Job "knows" (e.g. 39:1), but he also asks whether Job can manage this creation and care for it the way God does. Does Job hunt for the lion (38:39), feed the young ravens (38:41), give the wild donkey his home (39:6), use the wild ox in his service (39:9-12), care for the ostrich even though she has no sense (39:12-18), and give the horse his strength (39:19[-25]). God asks, "Does the hawk take flight by your wisdom" (39:26) or "does the eagle soar at your command?" (39:27). Through his power God manages his creation with wisdom and care. God's creation is not the playground of his power but the nursery of his care. The world is not out of control; God is managing it quite nicely. (Hicks 174)

The zoology exam administered by God to Job had two parts. The first part was completed (Job 38:39-39:30). Job failed part one! He could not handle a single question! And, in one sense, the most difficult questions about the animate creation are yet to come (Job 40:15-41:34) as God interrogates Job concerning the most powerful land and sea animals (i.e., Behemoth and Leviathan). Preceding the divine interrogation about these two awesome animate displays of God's creative power and knowledge, there is an interruption: The Lord says, "Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him? He who rebukes God, let him answer it" (Job 40:2). Job asked for

this whole process. He had challenged God: “Call and I will answer; Or let me speak, then You respond to me” (Job 13:22). God accepted Job’s challenge—weak as it was—and, through the preceding first set of questions (Job 38:2-39:30), God had masterfully responded to the words Job had spoken without knowledge (Job 38:2).

God allowed Job to “catch his breath” (Jackson, “Life’s” 145), but it is only a brief “calm” before the storm. He does ask, “Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him? He who rebukes God, let him answer it” (Job 40:2). However, Job wants nothing to do with this and says, “Behold, I am vile; What shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth. Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; Yes, twice, but I will proceed no further” (Job 40:4-5). Job says that he is “vile” (Job 40:4). It means that he (Job) is a lightweight. He is saying that he is in “way over his head.” He knows that **he cannot compete** with God. He is “out of his league.” Additionally, Job says, “What shall I answer You?” He knows that **he cannot confute** (refute) God. He had thought he could answer God (cf. Job 13:22), but he now admits he knows better. Finally, Job says, “I lay my hand over my mouth.” **He will constrain his words** and say nothing. However, “silence” is not “trust” (Jackson, *Book* 84). God will continue the interrogation.

Final Questions

Before God unleashes His final interrogation of Job concerning the two greatest land and sea creatures (i.e., Behemoth and Leviathan), He asks Job four questions by way of introduction (Job 40:8-9).

- Will you discredit my justice (Job 40:8)?
- Will you condemn Me in order to justify yourself (Job 40:8)?
- Do you have such power as God that enables you to dispense perfect justice (Job 40:9)?
- Do you have such a voice as God that enables you to speak and command the execution of judgment (Job 40:9)? (cf. Hailey, *Commentary* 350)

If Job can do these things, then God will acknowledge that Job can take the exercise of moral justice into his own hands.

If Job can adorn himself in the majesty, splendor, glory, and beauty of divine holiness, then God will admit and confess the reality of supernatural power possessed by this man (cf. Job 40:10-14). But Job has no answer! He cannot “play God” successfully! Warren sums up the utter failure of Job (and all humans) when it comes to man’s great inability to question God’s right of disposition of the entire creation of which He is the ultimate originator and sustainer:

God makes it clear to Job (and to all other men who may read the book) that while man may properly exercise his mind in the attempted solution to many questions, it is simply beyond man’s ability and prerogative to question whether God’s creative activity (including God’s right of disposition of what He had created—including the eternal disposition of wicked men) is proper (right).

God, in effect, says that man cannot fully explain even the *things* which he finds in the world. How, then, could he expect to be able to come into such knowledge as would enable him to question God’s creative activities. (“Living” 204)

Behemoth and Leviathan

In the final section of this awesome and overwhelming display of God’s omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence, attention is directed to the two greatest animals of all. First, Behemoth.

God says, “Look now at the behemoth, which I made along with you...See now his strength... and his power...He moves his tail like a cedar... He is the first of the ways of God; Only He who

made him can bring near his sword. (Job 40:15-17; Job 40:19)

The word *behemoth* means “‘the beast,’ i.e., the beast *par excellence*” (Smith 348). It is the “plural form of *beast*...regarded as a plural of intensity meaning *great beast*” (Jackson, *Book* 85). The animal has been identified as an elephant by some, but the common identification has been a hippopotamus even though the textual description does not fit. Morris (*Remarkable* 113-14) and Jackson (*Book* 85-86) both make a good case for behemoth being “some form of dinosaur, such as the brontosaurus” (86). Jackson presents seven factors that make it likely that this is some form of dinosaur:

- 1) Dinosaurs are known to have survived the flood. In Rhodesia there are cave paintings of the ancient brontosaurus left by a race of tribesmen who lived about 1500 B.C.
- 2) “Behemoth” is thought by some scholars to be related to an Egyptian term, *pehemu* [ox of the water], but this is not the Egyptian term for the hippopotamus.
- 3) The hippo has a short, slim tail, which hardly fits the description, “he moves his tail like a cedar” (17). The brontosaurus has a massive, long tail.
- 4) His description as “chief [largest] of the works of God” (19) more nearly fits the brontosaurus (30 tons) than the hippopotamus (4 tons).
- 5) Behemoth dare not be approached with the sword (19b), yet the Egyptian monuments frequently picture single hunters attacking the hippo with a spear.
- 6) The vegetation of whole mountains is said to supply behemoth’s food (20); the hippo normally eats about 200 pounds of food daily and stays near the water.
- 7) No man was able to capture behemoth (24), but representations of the

capture of the hippopotamus are common in Egyptian art. (86)

The second monstrous animal God uses in His final interrogation of Job is Leviathan. This animal appears to have lived at sea (Job 41:31-33). Some insist that Leviathan was a crocodile. Others say it is a whale. However, neither fits the description provided in this powerful excursus. In the following, Morris makes the case for Leviathan being some kind of now-extinct dinosaur:

“Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons?
Or his head with fish spears?...Behold, the
hope of him is in vain: shall not one be cast
down even at the sight of him? None is so
fierce that dare stir him up...the sword of him
that layeth at him cannot hold” (Job 41:7, 9,
10, 26). These and other verses indicate that
the leviathan was impregnable to human
efforts to capture or slay him. Yet zoos are full
of crocodiles, and crocodiles have been
hunted so successfully that they are often
considered an endangered species. The same
applies to whales.

And what about the following description?
“By his sneezings a light doth shine, and his eyes
are like the eyelids of the morning. Out of his
mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire leap
out. Out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as out of
a seething pot or caldron. His breath kindleth
coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth” (Job
41:18-21).

This is surely not a crocodile! To the possible
objection that not even dinosaurs breathed

fire, we could answer that no one *knows* what dinosaurs could do.

Dragons of various kinds were capable of breathing out fire—at least according to traditions from all parts of the world. Certain insects can, in effect, give out light or fire (e.g., the bombardier beetle and the firefly), as can various luminescent fish. Perhaps more to the point, dinosaur fossils have been excavated that show a strange protuberance, with internal cavity, on the top of the head. It is conceivable that this could have served as a sort of mixing chamber for combustible gases that would ignite when exhaled into the outside oxygen. (*Remarkable* 118)

“So God created great sea creatures, and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind” (Gen. 1:21). The “great sea creatures” are “great sea monsters” (ASV; NASV) or “sea monsters” (McCord 454). Dubach and Taber in their book, *Questions About the Oceans*, ask:

Are there really sea monsters? Although we discount the fabled sea monsters, such as the kraken which could swallow vessels whole, we have not yet explored the ocean thoroughly enough to say with absolute certainty that there are no monsters in the deep.

Scientific observations and records note that giant squids with tentacles 40 feet long live at 1,500 feet and that sizable objects have been detected by explosive echo sounding at greater depths.

Oarfish 40 to 50 feet long also have been observed by scientists. Either the oarfish or the giant squid with its long tentacles may have given rise to the sea serpent stories told by sailors of old.

In recent years, Danish scientists have studied large eel larvae that would grow 90 feet if their growth rate is the same as eels of other species. (90)

The Psalmist had some awareness of this monstrous ocean creature when he wrote, “Yet God my King is from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. You divided the sea by Your might; [Y]ou broke the heads of the sea monsters on the waters. You crushed the head of Leviathan” (Psa. 74:12-14, ESV). When the Psalmist affirmed life’s great acclamation (God), he included Leviathan as evidence of God’s greatness, honor, and majesty.

O Lord, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all. The earth is full of Your possessions—This great and wide sea, in which are innumerable teeming things, living things both small and great. There the ships sail about; There is that Leviathan which You have made to play there. (Psa. 104:24-26)

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

As set forth in the foregoing material, the book of Job raises and answers a number of crucial questions. Some of these questions are explicitly stated while others are implied in the chapters considered in this essay (38-41). From these questions great lessons are learned. What are some of these lessons, and how do they apply to one’s life today? For one living in the 21st century to study Job (or any other

book in the Bible) and fail to inquire concerning how the information in the book applies to his life would be a serious mistake.

One may study for many years this conversation God had with Job and never exhaust the depth of truth contained therein. It likely is the case that its application is inexhaustible. However, consider a few basic principles of application implied from the report of this marvelous exchange between God and Job.

General Revelation Is Valuable

Undergirding the information revealed in these chapters is the implication of the value of the revelation of God in the creation—i.e., the universe, the world, and man. Although it is insufficient to meet all of man's spiritual needs while he lives on Earth, the general revelation of God, when properly handled, proves the existence of God and from it one can know at least some things concerning the nature of God (cf. *Psa. 19:1-6; Psa. 139:14; Pro. 20:12; Acts 14:17; Rom. 1:20; Heb. 3:4*).

Although a man (like Job) may suffer with great intensity, such does not remove the proof in creation one finds for the existence of God. Former atheist Antony Flew, following his acceptance of theism, wrote:

Certainly, the existence of evil and suffering must be faced. However, philosophically speaking, that is a separate issue from the question of God's existence. From the existence of nature, we arrive at the ground of [God's] existence. Nature may have its imperfections, but this says nothing as to whether it had an ultimate Source. (156) [Note: As Thomas B. Warren has shown in his book, *Have Atheists Proved There Is No God?*, the existence of evil, itself, implies the existence of God. If real, objective evil exists, then God exists.]

God Cares And Controls

Although there are numerous questions that no man (including Job) can answer, the very unanswerable questions God asked Job themselves imply at least some things about God one can know as he suffers. These divine questions evidence the omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and omnibenevolence of God. The

marvelous workings of God in the inanimate and animate creation imply something great that undergirds our faith, even when suffering to great degrees. Warren explained,

[I]n the counsel of the all-wise, all-powerful, all-loving God lies a reason for life's difficulties, and in this truth we can rest our faith. Men may not know all about a particular incident of suffering or affliction, but they *can* know that this world is one in which "all things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. 8:28). We can know that if God is concerned about trees and animals, then we can also know that God is concerned for man. If God can control the universe around us, then He certainly can control (direct) the lives of men. ("Living" 205)

Trust Is The Priority

Job had asked for an explanation of why he was suffering (cf. Job 13:22; Job 31:35). However, what he received was not the detailed answer he desired, but more questions that implied the answer he needed. Morgan observes that God made "no reference...to the sufferings of Job, no explanation was offered of anything that had transpired" (*Answers* 102-03). "God is less interested in answering our questions than in strengthening our faith...God is under no obligation to explain anything he causes or allows to come into our lives, but...calls us to trust him" (Blanchard 540-41).

We (humans) must not know all the specific details of our lives, but we must trust God because of what we learn in His creation and in His word. It is not that we cannot know anything. ***God does not call us to a blind trust.*** We can (and must) know that (1) God is and (2) He can be trusted. From evidence such as that manifested in God's questions to Job, man can know that there is good reason for what happens in the world. If one knows God, it must be such that he also knows this is the case. However, this does not mean a man can

know the details of his own situation. We can (and should) trust God when we cannot see “why” something has happened. We trust God because of “the very evidence of purpose on the face of the universe” (Hailey, *Comments* 347).

The More Obvious Reason

Job had sufficient evidence, in the form of the marvelous questions God addressed to him, to cause him to submit lovingly to God in deep trust (cf. Job 42:1-6). He had special revelation from God in addition to the general revelation available in creation (cf. Job 23:12). If it was the case that Job could (and should) trust God with a more limited revelation than is available to those of us who live today, then it is much more obvious that those of us living today with access to the complete revelation of God through the person and work of Jesus Christ can (and must) trust God no matter what the details of life are for us. Peter wrote, “[T]hough now for a little while...you have been grieved by various trials...you...through [Jesus Christ] believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God” (1 Pet. 1:6; 1 Pet. 1:21). We can know that “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8:32).

Conclusion

Fitting for us as we conclude this look at these great chapters (Job 38-41) is Hailey’s eloquent and insightful summation that includes the following:

Jehovah spoke from the whirlwind in questions to Job, bringing the inanimate and animate world before him that he might behold the difference between God’s greatness and man’s smallness. Jehovah’s purpose was that Job might realize his arrogance in speaking about the Lord as he had, and his impudence in demanding that the Lord answer him.

Another point that stands out in Jehovah's speeches is that in the creation there was expressed and demonstrated an infinite wisdom, knowledge, and power, and that the design of purpose was stamped upon the entire creation. Seeing that in the creation of all things God was directed by an infinite wisdom, then by that wisdom He can use the adversities of life to discipline and refine man.

We may ponder the question of how God manages the affairs of His universe, but it is not our's to question His ability and the fact that He does. The knowledge, wisdom, and power to control and direct the **kosmos** is beyond our power to understand. It is not in man's ability to comprehend the greatness of God nor to grasp the magnitude of His operation. We must bow in reverence before such a One and worship in adoration, saying, "He hath done all things well." (*Commentary* 372-73)

In effect, God said if man in general (and Job in particular) cannot fully explain and comprehend the things of God's awesome creation of the universe, the world, and man, then it should not be thought strange that suffering also has its mysteries to humans. However, this much is sure—God, who is infinite in understanding and power, is in control and will do right! "Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite" (Psa. 147:5). "Let all the earth fear the Lord; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him" (Psa. 33:8).

You are worthy, O Lord,
To receive glory and honor and power;
For you created all things,

And by Your will they exist
And were created. (Rev. 4:11)

Notes

¹ See Warren, Thomas B. Warren, “Responses to Evolution.” *Sufficient Evidence*. 1.1 (2011): 15-28.

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CHAPTER 18

Our Adversary And Accuser: What We Learn About Satan From Job's Struggle

Cliff Goodwin

The stakes are high—extremely high! Most people have no idea concerning the peril they face. There is a cosmic struggle between good and evil, and man must make a choice. Satan is a defeated foe (King James Version, cf. Luke 10:18; Rev. 12:7-9), yet even in the throes of death, he effectively devours myriads of human souls unaware of his conspiracy. One might say that Satan “plays for keeps,” but the fact remains that not one condemned soul will benefit him in the least. He is damned regardless. He seeks only to drag down with him as many of God’s beloved creation as he possibly can. His true nature and motives are reminiscent of the thief described by Jesus, “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy” (John 10:10a).

The Bible provides very little, if anything, regarding why Satan loathes man so maliciously. However, the Scriptures are replete with evidence concerning the fact of his hatred. In his limited time before being cast forever into the lake of fire (cf. Rev. 20:10), he seemed to want nothing more than to garner precious human souls into the ranks of the condemned. Hell was not initially prepared for man (Mat. 25:41), but he who serves Satan in this life will be punished with him in the next (cf. Mat. 25:46; Rev. 20:15). Satan knows this fact and exploits it. He further knows that hurting God’s creation is the only possible way he can hurt God.

The book of Job provides an inspired record of a specific case in which Satan impugned both the righteousness of a man and the worthiness of God. Job was that man, and the book bearing his name opens with a most commendable description of his character. “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name *was* Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil” (Job 1:1). Later in the chapter, Satan accused Job of “fair-weather religion,” claiming that Job would curse God to His face if all his earthly possessions were taken away (Job 1:9-11). This charge is serious enough in light of the fact that one of God’s saints would be so slandered. Nevertheless, there is something deeper and more sinister concerning Satan’s allegation. In questioning Job’s fidelity and sincerity, Satan is actually assailing God’s own worthiness (Cates). Satan’s charge implies that God is not worthy of man’s devotion apart from the many blessings that God showers upon man. In other words, God would have to bribe a person in order to enjoy Job-like consecration and fidelity.

In the case of Job, Satan makes an assault against both God and His servant. The devil is permitted within bounds to unleash his satanic fury upon a mere human being, yet to no avail. In the end, Job is doubly blessed (Job 42:10-17), and God is vindicated (cf. Job 42:1-6; Jam. 5:11). Even further, a historical account of these events is provided and preserved for posterity’s sake. To this day, God’s children consult the book of Job and find strength to endure the trials of life. The record shows Satan’s hurling his worst at Job—all that he was permitted to do—yet coming away unsuccessful and defeated. What profound encouragement and thrilling consolation for the Christian! An argument could be made that perhaps more information and insight is given in the book of Job concerning man’s adversary than in any other book of Scripture. Through it all, man sees that God is worthy and that Satan is woefully inadequate and undone.

A Resigned Being

Some would like to elevate Satan to a status similar to that of God, but nothing could be further from reality. Time and again, the

Scriptures make it clear that Satan is a resigned being before God; that is, he is ultimately subservient unto God, though not truly submissive. Satan is the epitome of one who complies outwardly—because he must—while resisting and resenting inwardly. He is only able to do that which he is permitted.

This fact can be demonstrated from passages throughout the Bible, but especially from excerpts of Job. Following the inspired description of Job, his prosperity and his piety, with which the book opens (Job 1:1-5), the text reveals, “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them” (Job 1:6). The expression *sons of God* is used throughout the Bible with varied meanings. Its first appearance obviously denoted the righteous seed-line of Seth, set in contrast to the posterity of Cain (cf. Gen. 6:1-5). In the New Testament, the expression is invariably used to designate God’s spiritual children, especially under the provisions of the gospel. However, in the book of Job, “sons of God” is used three times, each time denoting angels (celestial beings). This usage is self-evident in the first two occurrences (Job 1:6; Job 2:1) and further confirmed by the final occurrence, “When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (Job 38:7). In an explanatory endnote, Jackson argues insightfully that the “sons of God” must be angelic beings, for the literal stars were not created until the fourth day of creation—*after* the foundations of the earth had been laid (88).

The Hebrews author makes it clear that angels are subordinate beings (Heb. 1:14). Thus, the heavenly scenes in Job chapters one and two depict the angels as “presenting” themselves before God—a term implying their accountability before Him. In the first scene (Job 1:6-12), it is not clear whether Satan were summoned to this meeting or if he came of his own volition. In the second scene, however, the text records that “Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD” (Job 2:1b). Even in his rebellion, Satan is still inferior to God and accountable unto Him. “At a special time set aside for it, the Accuser again appeared with ‘the sons of God’ and as a subordinate presented himself before the Lord” (Smick 884).

The devil's inferiority and unwilling subservience before God is seen even better in the limitations God placed on Satan's treatment of Job. In the first round of "challenge and calamity" Satan was strictly charged, "Behold, all that he hath *is* in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand" (Job 1:12). Having been so permitted and simultaneously **so restricted**, Satan goes forth from the presence of the Lord. It is obvious from the events that follow in the balance of chapter one that Satan does only what he is permitted to do. Likewise, Satan operates within the bounds of God's limitations in the second round. Even when he is allowed to harm Job physically, Satan must stop short of taking the man's life (Job 2:6). As the balance of the book bears out, Satan complies with God's mandate. He is definitely a *resigned* being.

This picture of Satan in the book of Job accords with everything provided about him in the New Testament. Truly, greater is He that is in the Christian, than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4)! Though he is the "prince of this world," he has been cast out and cast down by the redemptive work of Christ (John 12:31-32; cf. Rev. 12:7-11). The victory of Christ was begun during the earthly ministry of Him and His disciples. As the disciples exercised the Lord's authority over evil spirits, Jesus saw Satan fall as lightning from heaven (Luke 10:17-18). Brown submits the following amplification of Christ's sentiments.

I followed you on your mission, and watched its triumphs; while you were wondering at the subjection to you of devils in My name, a grander spectacle *was opening* to My view; sudden as the darting of lightning from heaven to earth, lo! Satan was beheld falling from heaven!

The Lord's victory would be ultimately accomplished through the crucifixion and resurrection (cf. Col. 2:14-15). It will ultimately culminate one day when Satan is cast into hell (Rev. 20:10).

A Rebellious Being

One does not often think of rebellion and resignation in the same person, but this is certainly the case with Satan. He cannot help but comply before the Almighty God of eternity, but he complies reluctantly and resentfully. At heart he is a rebel, and inasmuch as he is permitted, he will rebel against God and His will.

The earliest picture of Satan depicts him in this frame. God had placed man in the garden of Eden, with only one prohibition (cf. Gen. 2:16-17). When Satan first came onto the Biblical scene, he immediately attacked that one prohibition. He completely negated what God had said (cf. Gen. 3:1-4). In his dealings with the human race since that time, the devil has continued to attack, undermine, and rebel against what God has said. This spirit is sadly mirrored in those who serve Satan.

The book of Job does not differ in its portrayal of the adversary. In fact, the first two chapters include an air of smugness and insolence in their description of the devil.

And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. (Job 1:7)

And the LORD said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. (Job 2:2)

In both recorded appearances of Satan before God, the Almighty asks him, in essence, where he had been and what had he been doing. Satan's reply both times indicates an aloofness as well as a pseudo-authority. It is as if Satan were saying, "I've been going over my domain, keeping check on what is mine." Hailey offers the following analysis, "Satan's answer indicates a detached spirit, one on his own and not responsible to any one...he was walking about,

‘seeking whom he may devour’ (1 Pet. 5:8). This would be totally consistent with his nature” (36).

It is true that, in one sense, Satan is “the god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4). He controls the affairs of the world in that he seduces man away from God’s will, leading him to devilish deeds and disastrous consequences. Thus, the whole world is said to lie in wickedness (1 John 5:19), and Satan is said to take captive the souls of men (cf. 2 Tim. 2:26). It appears that even in this ancient time, Satan was already puffed up concerning his “success” amid humanity. But God knew of one whom Satan did not have in his clutches. His name was Job.

How frustrating it must be to be the devil! God knows exactly how to put Satan in his place. For example, one must realize that God never asks a question for the sake of information. Instead, He asks a question in order to emphasize a point. As the book of Job opens, God asks Satan a series of questions designed to make a point. Satan cannot even gloat in his pseudo-dominion over the world of men. God asks the first question, seeming to open the door of opportunity for Satan’s gloating (cf. Job 1:7; Job 2:2). Then, as quickly as the door seems to be opened, it is slammed shut in the devil’s face! God asks a second question for which Satan has no viable answer—only baseless allegations. “Hast thou considered my servant Job?” (Job 1:8a; cf. Job 2:3a). God is always one step ahead—if not a million. At every turn, Satan’s move is anticipated. God has a solution for every temptation the devil hurls at man, if only man will avail himself of it.

A Reckless Being

In his rebellion against God, Satan displays a most reckless attitude and manner. Such recklessness can be seen in a number of ways, but especially in regard to the truth. Satan has no care whatsoever for the facts! He makes rash statements with little or no substantiation. He is quick to interpose his theory or philosophy, only to have such utterly refuted later on. When it comes to his agenda, the devil is obliged to say anything and everything he supposes will achieve his purpose.

Since the beginning, Satan has always seemed to be reckless with the truth. He lied to mother Eve, flatly contradicting the truth of God (Gen. 3:4; cf. Gen. 2:16-17). Again, the truth did not fit his agenda. But a lie did. The apostle Paul penned, “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Cor. 11:3). His desire was and is to divert man from faithful obedience unto God. He will lie if necessary in order to achieve that end.

In the case of Job, Satan made rash accusations that were wholly unfounded and ultimately proven false. He was reckless in what he said, caring not for facts or truth, but only for the opportunity to attack God and His servant. In both appearances before the God of heaven, Satan made the brazen charge concerning Job, “He will curse thee to thy face” (Job 1:11; Job 2:5). Did Satan know this for a fact? Absolutely and obviously not! Did he care that he might be making an inaccurate statement? No! He is a reckless being who is, indeed, reckless with the truth. It is interesting to note that inspiration points out twice, after both assaults of the devil against Job, that Job did not react in a sinful manner (Job 1:22; Job 2:10). The devil was wrong! But in this sense, he did not really care.

A word needs to be said here regarding the accusations of Satan. In Revelation 12:10, Satan is referred to as “the accuser of our brethren.” In the same verse, however, it is further stated that the accuser of our brethren “is cast down.” Contextually, this statement follows what seems to be a summation of the redemptive work of Christ (cf. Rev. 12:5-9). Hence, the accuser’s being cast down is expressed as a result of what Christ accomplished and emphasizes the significance of it. All the Biblical evidence suggests that Satan is no longer able to unscrupulously level charges against the children of God today, as he did in times before the cross (e.g., in the case of Job). One of the greatest passages in support of this view was penned by the inspired Paul, “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? *It is* God that justifieth” (Rom. 8:33). One can imagine a scenario in which Satan comes before God, accusing God’s faithful of weakness and sin, only to see the long arm of the Lord stretch out

with a Divine finger pointing to Calvary. The price has been forever paid, and the accuser has been forever silenced!

Though cast down as the accuser of the brethren, Satan is still a liar. Jesus described him as the father of lies (John 8:44). He must have originated the practice, for it certainly did not originate with the Godhead, and who better to invent the treacherous device than the devil himself? Perhaps this is what was intended when Jesus said, "When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own." Dishonesty and deception are straight out of the devil's arsenal; they are of his own making. But even further, he employs his lies in the murdering of mankind. In the same verse Jesus said of Satan, "He was a murderer from the beginning." The death of all people—both physical and spiritual—can be laid at the devil's feet. All men die physically (Heb. 9:27), because Satan first lied and successfully introduced sin into the world. This separated man from the tree of life and the immortality that accompanied it (cf. Gen. 3:22-24; Rom. 5:12; Heb. 2:14-15). Even worse, though, is the fact that sin brings about spiritual death (cf. Rom. 6:23; Jam. 1:13-16). Sin is Satan's instrument by which he drags down the souls of men to the same fiery fate awaiting him. Thus, he is not only reckless with truth; he is also reckless with the lives and souls of men. He is the ultimate murderer—a murderer in the truest sense of the word—and he began all of his earthly treachery with a lie.

The book of Job records ample evidence concerning Satan's recklessness with human life. He obviously thinks nothing of the lives of Job's children (Job 1:18-19). Instead, he uses their deaths as a means to his end. Life is cheap to Satan. He ever seeks to rob and deprive man of that which God graciously provides and affords. He is pleased to rob one of physical life, if possible; however, he is thrilled to rob one of spiritual life.

A Ruthless Being

Those who trivialize the devil and his nature, or even joke about his existence, do not realize the kind of being with whom they are dealing. He is ruthless and vicious beyond the full comprehension

of humanity. All the malice in the world traces back ultimately to him. All the pain, sorrow, and suffering are because of him. The most wicked people who make infamous news headlines, do so in service to him. How can one shudder at the thought of human atrocities and not take seriously the satanic author behind such things? Man's adversary is most ruthless, and the Scriptures certainly bear this out.

In the instance of Job, Satan thought nothing of taking away virtually all of his earthly possessions. Wealth gained by honest and honorable means was gone seemingly in the span of an hour (cf. Job 1:13-17). It mattered not to Satan. With him, there is no respect or appreciation for hard work and honorable gain. Material increase by such means is actually a gift from God, "who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. 6:17). Satan, however, is a thief by nature.

There is no such thing with Satan as "natural affection." He is not moved or touched in the least by even the most tender of human relationships. He cut down Job's seven sons and three daughters as one would cut down the grass of the field (Job 1:2; Job 1:18-19; cf. 1 Pet. 1:24). He is unmoved by man's groanings and tears. The devil did all he could do to reduce Job to a shell of a man, sitting in the middle of an ash heap, clinging to life itself (Job 2:7-8). He is the most pitiless being there has ever been. One would receive compassion, sympathy, and mercy from the proverbial "axe-murderer" before he would ever receive such from Satan. No entreaty could be made, no amount of begging and pleading would every sway him. The devil is the most calloused, most malevolent being in the universe. One shudders to imagine such a being totally unrestrained by God, left entirely to his own cruelty. Thanks be to God that such is not the case!

Worst of all is Satan's ruthlessness in spiritual matters. There is a great eternity that looms before us all, and Satan would do anything in his limited power to see that each one of us were forever consigned to the fires of hell. Surely this was the thrust of Peter's inspired words, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). Combine the subtlety of a serpent (cf. 2 Cor. 11:3) with the ravenous ferocity of a lion and the result is man's adversary,

Satan. The very thought of facing such a foe without Jesus Christ as one's champion is terrifying. Sin is no game, and Satan is not playing.

The experience of Job establishes a most important contrast for the Bible student. The same book which reveals the utter ruthlessness of Satan in vivid detail also manifests the tender pity and compassion of God. James states this truth, "Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (Jam. 5:11). God was with Job through the entire ordeal, never forsaking his faithful servant (cf. Heb. 13:5b-6). After Job had been tried, and both he and God had been vindicated, the Lord blessed Job twice as much in the end as in the beginning (Job 42:10; Job 42:12). God had everything under control the entire time.

A Reasoning Being

Of all the traits of Satan revealed in the book of Job, this present characteristic is, in some ways, the most sobering. The adversary presented in Job is not prone to haphazard, ill-timed assaults. He is not stupid in his strategy. He comes after his target with deliberate actions and purposeful timing. He brings all of his supernatural (though not Divine) intellect to bear upon the man whom he seeks to destroy. Even at first glance, the thought of such an enemy is impressive. Upon further examination and deeper reflection, however, the prospect of encountering such a foe appears grave indeed. Yea, such a battle would be utterly hopeless without the aid of God.

From Satan's first round of calamities brought against Job, at least two key facts need to be noticed. Both of these pertain to the precision and timing of what Satan did. First, observe the phrase that appears at the beginning of Job 1:16 and is repeated in the beginnings of the two subsequent verses. "While he *was* yet speaking, there came also another, and said." Satan so timed the individual stages of calamity that Job would receive the horrible news in one crushing wave after another. He had no time to regroup or recover. While his heart and

head were reeling from one dreadful message, he was hit with yet another, and another, and another! How merciless and cruel—but at the same time—how methodical and calculating!

Second, the precision of Satan's strikes can be seen in that one servant's life was spared in each assault. Why? To show a little compassion? Never! The only reason these servants were spared was in order for them to be the "bearers of bad news." Satan definitely knew what he was doing.

Likewise, there is a reason why Satan killed all of Job's children, but left Job his wife. He had plans for her. In the second chapter, one sees this grief-stricken woman speaking as one of the foolish women. "Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die" (Job 2:9). Obviously, Satan had reasoned out his process. He is NOT an omniscient being, as is God, but he is an intelligent, reasoning, methodical being nonetheless.

Christians would do well to take note of the methodical nature of Satan's attacks. Paul wrote, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11). The word *wiles* is translated from the Greek *methodeia*—the word from which the English term *method* is derived. Satan is serious about this war. He has schemes and methods whereby he seeks to conquer the souls of men. God's children are forewarned; we are not ignorant of his devices (cf. 2 Cor. 2:11). The child of God must keep his head up and his eyes opened. He needs to be aware of Satan's tactics and alert to any developments wherein those tactics may potentially be employed. There is a war going on, and Christians are in the thick of it!

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CHAPTER 19

The End Of The Lord: What We Learn About God From Job's Struggle

B. J. Clarke

One of the most famous characters of the Old Testament is mentioned only once in the New Testament. The inspired penman James wrote: "Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (King James Version, Jam. 5:11). Over the almost two millennia since James penned these words, men and women of every generation have continued to hear "of the patience of Job."

Of course, to understand the "patience of Job" one must understand the true story of Job. In short, the story is that a very righteous man from the land of Uz, named Job, was also a very wealthy man with a large family (Job 1:1-3). He was not some composite character, but rather an actual historical person. Ezekiel regarded Job to be just as historical as Noah and Daniel (Eze. 14:14). From all indications, Job lived during the Patriarchal Age. This is so because: "(1) Job offers his own sacrifices (Job 1:5) as do the patriarchs (Gen. 22:13); (2) Job's wealth is measured in terms of livestock and servants (Job 1:3) as is Abraham's (Gen. 12:6); (3) Job's longevity (Job 42:16) is matched only by persons in patriarchal times" (Elwell).

While Job was living a righteous life on earth, meanwhile, in heaven, God was speaking in glowing terms about Job to Satan. Satan countered that Job only served God because God had blessed

him so much (Job 1:8-9). Satan was positive that Job would curse God to His face if God cursed him and took his blessings away. Yet, God had so much confidence in Job's faithfulness that He allowed Satan to do anything to him, except to touch him personally (Job 1:12).

Then the dreadful day came—the day when Job lost every one of his children and all of his sheep, servants, camels, and wealth (Job 1:13-19). Job's initial reaction was incredible in view of how much he had lost. He “rent his mantle, shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped” (Job 1:20). Rather than cursing God, Job turned to God, and said, “Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return hither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:20-21). The writer tells us that “In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly” (Job 1:22).

When God brought Job's steadfast allegiance to Satan's attention, Satan insisted that Job would curse God to the face if he lost his personal health. Once again, God believed that Job's faithfulness would persist, no matter what happened to him, and thus God allowed Satan to do everything to Job but take his life (Job 2:1-6). Satan wasted no time in assaulting Job physically. He smote him with boils from the sole of his foot unto the crown of his head (Job 2:7). As he sat in the midst of the ashes, scraping himself with a broken piece of pottery, his wife said, “Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die” (Job 2:9). Job told his wife that she was speaking as a foolish woman would speak and then asked, “What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” (Job 2:10). This was not the reaction Satan was hoping for from Job. “In all this did not Job sin with his lips” (Job 2:10).

After this, we read of the arrival of Job's three friends who, to their credit, traveled hundreds of miles “to mourn with him and to comfort him” (Job 2:11). By the time they arrived, Job's appearance had deteriorated to the point that they did not even recognize him (Job 2:12). Again, to their credit, they were genuinely moved by Job's condition to the point of weeping on his behalf. In a further show of

respect, “they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great” (Job 2:13).

So many sermons and articles about Job “hit the fast forward button” at this point in the story in an effort to get to the happy ending where God “blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses. He had also seven sons and three daughters” (Job 42:12-13). While we all enjoy happy endings, the tendency to race to the last chapter of the book, for the joyous conclusion, robs the hearer/reader of the full impact of the journey.

Sandwiched between the prose accounts of the beginning and ending of the story, one finds high drama in poetic form. Job engages in a number of impassioned soliloquies (Job 3; Job 28; Job 29-31), which are surrounded by a trio of spirited disputes with Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar (Job 4-14; Job 15-21; Job 22-27). After listening to the dialogue between Job and the friends, a young man by the name of Elihu then speaks up (Job 32-37) and offers his analysis of Job’s situation. Finally, God’s interrogation of Job occupies Job 38-41, and Job 42 concludes the book.

“You Have Heard Of The Patience Of Job”

Skipping over the poetic sections of the book and leaping from Job 2 to Job 42 will lead to misinterpreting the meaning of the “patience of Job.” Quite frankly, I can still remember the initial shock that passed through me when I first took the time to read the entire book of Job. All of my life I had heard preachers praise Job for his patience in the midst of severe trials. Because I had only heard about the first two chapters and the last chapter, I had a very limited view of Job’s actions and statements throughout the book. Thus, I always interpreted his patience to mean the total absence of complaining, because he did not do any complaining in the first two chapters of the book.

Having been exposed only to the prologue and epilogue, I assumed that Job never said a cross word and always found a

way to smile sweetly through the pain and suffering which came his way. You can imagine my amazement when I read the text carefully enough to ascertain that the same Job who initially fell down upon the ground and worshipped at the onset of his suffering is the same man who, just a few days later, cursed the day he was born (Job 3:1-26).

This amazement was intensified when I read that the same Job who said, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord," is also the same man who, just a few days later, bitterly complained to God, and against God, concerning his circumstances. Truly, "the Job of the poetry is anything but the model of proverbial patience that tradition has associated with Job. Job is on an emotional roller coaster, one moment hurling angry epithets at the heavens, the next solemnly trusting that he will be vindicated" (Shelley 542). Consider an initial example of Job's complaints to God:

Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak
in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the
bitterness of my soul. Am I a sea, or a whale, That
thou settest a watch over me? When I say, My
bed shall comfort me, My couch shall ease my
complaint; Then thou scarest me with dreams,
And terrifiest me through visions: So that my
soul chooseth strangling, And death rather than
my life. I loathe it; I would not live alway: Let
me alone; for my days are vanity. What is man,
that thou shouldest magnify him? And that thou
shouldest set thine heart upon him? And that
thou shouldest visit him every morning, And
try him every moment? How long wilt thou not
depart from me, Nor let me alone till I swallow
down my spittle? I have sinned; what shall I do
unto thee, O thou preserver of men? Why hast
thou set me as a mark against thee, So that I am
a burden to myself? (Job 7:11-20)

In view of statements like this, one may wonder how Job ever gained the reputation of being a man of patience. The answer lies in properly defining the word patience as used in James 5:11:

Job's [patience] is no unquestioning submission; he struggled and questioned, and sometimes even defied, but the flame of his faith was never extinguished. The word used of him is that great New Testament word *hupomonē*, which describes not a passive patience but that gallant spirit which can confront the tides of doubt and sorrow and disaster and come out with faith still stronger on the other side. There may be a faith which never complained or questioned; but still greater is the faith which was tortured by questions and still believed. It was the faith which held on grimly that came out on the other side, for 'The Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning' (Job 42:12). (Barclay 145-46)

To put it another way, "Patience can be described as passive endurance; by contrast, perseverance is the active determination of a believer whose faith triumphs in the midst of afflictions" (Kistemaker 169). Indeed, Job's perseverance has been, is now, and always will be worthy of admiration by his fellow strugglers on earth. How many of us would have demonstrated the same tenacity as did Job? He is a genuine hero of the faith!

"You Have Seen The End Of The Lord"

With no desire to detract from the tenacious endurance exemplified by Job, it is crucial to remember that the Book of Job also exemplifies the attributes of Almighty God. In the very passage in which James mentions that his readers had "heard of the patience of Job," he goes on to say that his readers had "seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (Jam. 5:11).

The commentaries contain considerable discussion of the meaning of the phrase *the end of the Lord*. *The New American Commentary* admits, “This is a notoriously difficult phrase to translate” (Richardson 226). The Greek word translated *end* is *telos*, and there are two possible meanings of the word as used in James 5:11. Some translators regard the word as synonymous with the word *purpose*. If this meaning is correct, then the passage is saying, “You have seen the purpose of the Lord” in allowing Job to suffer. “The end of the Lord (Gr *telos*) may be better rendered ‘the Lord’s goal.’ Our Lord permits suffering, because it leads to His excellent purposes (Rom 8:28; Phil 1:6)” (Hindson and Kroll). *The Word Biblical Commentary* also understands the phrase to mean “purpose” or “design” (Martin 195).

On the other hand, the *UBS Handbook* on James mentions a second possibility:

The second possibility, favored by more commentators, is to take it in the sense of “end” (so KJV), “outcome,” or “result,” that is, to take the phrase as an objective genitive, referring to the final outcome that God brought about. The outcome of Job’s situation was the restoration of his family and fortune (Job 42:10–17). The second possibility obviously fits the context better and therefore is the one to be preferred. It is also in accord with the thoughts in verses 7–8 above. Some scholars take the Lord here to be Christ and interpret the “end” to be the death of Christ, or even the second coming of Christ, but these interpretations are not supported by the context. (Loh and Hatton, 185-86)

Marvin Vincent regards *the end of the Lord* as “a peculiar expression,” but agrees that its meaning points to the outcome of Job’s suffering, “The happy conclusion to which God brought Job’s

trials” (*Word Studies*). A. T. Robertson understands the expression to mean, “The conclusion wrought by the Lord in Job’s case” (Job 42:12) (*Word Pictures*).

If the word *telos* in James 5:11 does refer to the result intended by the Lord, then what does the outcome of Job’s suffering tell us about God?

The outcome of Job’s experience shows how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. This echoes the words of Exo 34:6 and Psa 103:8. The adjective rendered compassionate is used only here in the New Testament. It is literally “[full of] many inward parts [or, entrails].” Among the Hebrew people the inward parts were the seat of the emotions, equivalent to “heart” or “liver” in many cultures. The adjective then means “full of compassion”...or “very kind.” (Loh and Hatton 186)

Douglas Moo points out that both interpretations of “telos” fit the contexts of both Job and James:

In Job 42:5–6, Job confesses that he has finally learned his lesson about the majesty and sovereign goodness of God; and a reference to the “purpose” that God has in suffering would certainly be an important source of comfort for James’s readers. On the other hand, the restorative “end” of Job’s story is of course prominent in the canonical book and would be of equal comfort to James’s readers. Your present suffering, James would be saying, is not the “end” of the story; God will transform your situation for good when Christ is revealed in glory. This latter interpretation should probably be adopted. (229-30)

The reason that James reminds his readers about Job is to remind them that “patient endurance can sustain itself on the conviction that hardships are not meaningless, but that God has some end or purpose in them which He will accomplish” (Pfeiffer and Harrison).

When we are immersed in suffering, it is very motivational to know that the end intended for us by the Lord will be so much better than we can imagine. There is a better time coming!

If we did not know what James calls the end intended by the Lord (the final issue or result which the Lord brings to pass), we might be tempted to envy the wicked. Asaph was jealous when he saw the prosperity of the wicked (Ps. 73:3–17). The more he thought about it, the more perturbed he became. Then he went into the sanctuary of God and understood their latter end. This dispelled all his envy. David had the same experience. In Psalm 17:15 he describes the portion of the believer in the life to come. In view of this, it pays the believer to be steadfast. In Job’s case, the end intended by the Lord was that God gave him twice as much as he had before (Job 42:10–15). (MacDonald)

Although we cannot always agree with the writings of John Calvin, his comments on James 5:10–11 are very well worded:

The end of the Lord. By these words he intimates that afflictions ought ever to be estimated by their end. For at first God seems to be far away, and Satan in the meantime revels in the confusion; the flesh suggests to us that we are forsaken of God and lost. We ought, then, to extend our view farther, for near and around us there appears no light. Moreover, he has called it the

end of the Lord, because it is his work to give a prosperous issue to adversities. If we do our duty in bearing evils obediently, he will by no means be wanting in performing his part. Hope directs us only to the end; God will then shew himself very merciful, how ever rigid and severe he may seem to be while afflicting us. (Galaxie Software)

The latter portion of James 5:11 clearly reveals that the story of Job is more than just a revelation about what happened to him. More importantly, the book of Job is a revelation about God. As we examine Job's struggle, there is much we can learn about God. What do we learn specifically about God from the book of Job?

We Learn That God, And Only God, Is All-Knowing

As righteous as he was, Job was not all-knowing. He did not know why he was suffering. The three friends of Job were not all-knowing. Although they thought they knew why Job was suffering, presumably because of his sins, they actually had no knowledge of what brought about his suffering. For that matter, none of the earthly characters in the book (Job, Job's Wife, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, Elihu, etc.) knew at the time about the conversation between God and Satan which preceded Job's suffering. None of them knew of the confidence God had placed in Job which confidence caused him to allow Job to suffer as an object lesson to Satan and the whole world, that God is worthy of our worship whether He blesses us or not.

The only character in the Book of Job who is all-knowing is Almighty God. Because He is omnipresent, He is omniscient. Because He sees all, He knows all. From a study of the book of Job, we learn the following things about the all-knowing God.

He Knows What We Do

God knew everything about Job's conduct. He knew of his righteous behavior. Thus He said to Satan, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil" (Job 1:8;

Job 2:3). The all-knowing God evaluates our conduct. Moreover, it is remarkable that He would verbalize in heaven His appreciation for the righteous conduct of a single human being on earth! Can you imagine God singling you out from all the human beings on the earth and calling you by name as one of His most faithful servants? What an amazing tribute to Job this was! Our God is genuinely proud of His children when they honor His Will.

He Knows What We Say

The Psalmist declared that there was not a word in his tongue that God did not know about (Psa. 139:4). The book of Job certainly demonstrates this truth. God knew of every word spoken by Job and his friends. After seven days of initial silence, both Job and his friends started talking and that is when their problems began.

God heard what Job said. Job said some very good things in the first two chapters (Job 1:21; Job 2:10), but beginning in Chapter 3, his tone began to change. He began to lament even having been born. We noted earlier the bitter words of Job recorded in Job 7:11-20. This was not an isolated incident. With each passing chapter, his confusion and bitterness seemed to grow. It is worthwhile to take time to thread some of these passages together in order that we might gather a glimpse of a Job with whom many Bible students are unfamiliar.

Speaking of God, Job said, "If I had called, and he had answered me; Yet would I not believe that he had hearkened unto my voice. For he breaketh me with a tempest, And multiplieth my wounds without cause. He will not suffer me to take my breath, But filleth me with bitterness (Job 9:16-18). Later on, in the very same speech, Job boldly declares:

My soul is weary of my life; I will leave my
complaint upon myself; I will speak in the
bitterness of my soul. I will say unto God, Do
not condemn me; Shew me wherefore thou
contendest with me. Is it good unto thee that
thou shouldest oppress, That thou shouldest

despise the work of thine hands, And shine upon the counsel of the wicked? Hast thou eyes of flesh? Or seest thou as man seeth? Are thy days as the days of man? Are thy years as man's days, That thou inquirest after mine iniquity, And searchest after my sin? Thou knowest that I am not wicked; And there is none that can deliver out of thine hand. (Job 10:1–7)

Job is so perturbed that he says sharply to God, “Are not my days few? cease then, And let me alone, that I may take comfort a little (Job 10:20).

On more than one occasion, Job was very bold to place the blame for his plight upon the shoulders of Almighty God:

God hath delivered me to the ungodly, And turned me over into the hands of the wicked. I was at ease, but he hath broken me asunder: He hath also taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces, And set me up for his mark. His archers compass me round about, He cleaveth my reins asunder, and doth not spare; He poureth out my gall upon the ground. He breaketh me with breach upon breach, He runneth upon me like a giant. I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin, And defiled my horn in the dust. My face is foul with weeping, And on my eyelids is the shadow of death; Not for any injustice in mine hands: Also my prayer is pure. (Job 16:11–17)

Job was also very confused concerning why God seemed so distant and withdrawn from him:

Know now that God hath overthrown me, And hath compassed me with his net. Behold, I cry

out of wrong, but I am not heard: I cry aloud,
but there is no judgment. He hath fenced up my
way that I cannot pass, And he hath set darkness
in my paths. He hath stripped me of my glory,
And taken the crown from my head. He hath
destroyed me on every side, and I am gone:
And mine hope hath he removed like a tree. He
hath also kindled his wrath against me, And he
counteth me unto him as one of his enemies.
(Job 19:6–11)

In one of his strongest expressions of complaint, Job depicts God as using him for target practice. He even alleges that God is cruel. “I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear me: I stand up, and thou regardest me not. Thou art become cruel to me: With thy strong hand thou opposest thyself against me. Thou liftest me up to the wind; thou causest me to ride upon it, And dissolvest my substance” (Job 30:20–22).

Any compassionate human reader can certainly understand Job's desire for immediate vindication. Job is not interested in eulogies at his grave after he is dead and gone. He wants vindication and he wants it now (Zink 152). William Lillie's point, that Job's thoughts are “deprived of almost all of its logic by the intensity of his pain,” is a point well taken (355). However, it is extremely important to differentiate between Job's right to wonder about his circumstances—and even to ask God questions concerning it—and his right to hurl false and boastful accusations against Almighty God.

God held Job accountable for what he said. The Almighty not only heard the words Job had spoken—He confronted him about some of these words. When God first approaches Job out of the whirlwind, he charges Job with darkening the counsel of God by speaking words without knowledge (Job 38:1–2). He orders Job to gird up his loins and prepare for questioning (Job 38:3). Job had accused God of being “a merciless hunter, an insidious spy, a capricious destroyer, and a sinister ruler who employed his

‘wisdom’ and ‘counsel’ to create chaos rather than order in nature and society” (Habel 536). It was now time for Job to make good on his accusations.

An even more powerful evidence of the transgression of Job’s lips is seen in God’s second speech to Job. The Lord answered Job, “Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it” (Job 40:2). Keil & Delitzsch note that the word *contendeth* signifies a censurer and fault-finder (349). In essence, God is saying, “Does Job now still (after seeing and hearing of God’s majesty and wisdom) wish to set God right?” (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown 98). Hence, God indicts Job of finding fault with the Almighty.

The charge becomes even more specific when God asks Job, “Would you condemn me that you may be justified?” (Job 40:8). Is it a sin to condemn God and self-righteously justify ourselves? Indeed. Hence, in the midst of his suffering Job became so enamored with justifying himself that he crossed the boundary and condemned God in order to do so. Job’s desire for exoneration and vindication is one thing; condemning God to achieve such is entirely another. It is entirely presumptive for human beings to apply their standards of value to the cosmos (Conant 247). The book of Job stands as a rebuke to anyone who thinks that they can govern the world better than God does.

In his commentary on the message of Job, David Atkinson relates the story of an exhausted preacher on the way home from comforting people all night at a wartime blitz in London. As he travels toward home, he happens upon another preacher. In relating the number of suffering people he had assisted that night, the preacher said to the other, “I wish I could be on the throne of the universe for just ten minutes.” The other preacher replied, “If you were on the throne for ten minutes, I would not wish to live in your world for ten seconds” (155-56). Job is guilty of such presumption and needs to be humbled. John Briggs Curtis provides a concise summary of the Yahweh speeches and their intended impact upon Job:

The words of God, however, are not a mere recitation of the might and power of God. Always the divine words are loaded with a challenge to Job: In comparison with God, Job knows so little and has such insignificant power—even the simplest aspects of the physical and biological world have escaped his understanding. Indeed this ignorant and inconsequential man Job is nothing but a faultfinder and a complainer who would put God in the wrong (40:2,8) even though he does not know what he is talking about. (497)

Job has not just been asking questions and saying, “I don’t understand.” Rather, he has been hurling accusations and saying, “God, you don’t understand.” When it finally becomes apparent to Job that he is the one lacking the understanding, he recognizes that both the form *and* manner of his argument with God have been wrong. By the time God finished interrogating Job, he was quick to confess,

I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; Things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: But now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. (Job 42:1–6)

Note that Job refers to himself as “vile” (Job 40:4). The Hebrew word used here denotes “being small or light” (Hartley 517). After speaking in pride against God, Job now humbles himself before God. Instead of viewing his reason and ideas on how to run the universe

as superior to God's, Job now sees himself as he really is before God: very small and very ignorant.

In fact, the full implications of God's opening question, "Who is this?" hits Job with brute force. R. A. F. Mackenzie declared:

In the context, this is the most shattering question ever posed. By itself alone it would sufficiently convey the revolution of thought and sentiment produce in Job by the theophany, the radical change of viewpoint to which his speech in 42.2-6 bears witness. God is God, and Job is a creature—the experience of that simple but fundamental fact is the primary effect of this encounter. (442)

Job's response to the second speech of Yahweh further demonstrates the seriousness with which Job approached his reconciliation to God. He freely admits that he has been speaking without knowledge and obscuring the counsel of God. He has now heard and seen God and thus recognizes his puniness before God.

It would certainly be inappropriate to charge that Job was guilty of sin simply because he did not understand some things. However, Job feels that he has done something serious enough to warrant repenting in dust and ashes (Job 42:6). Why did Job feel so guilty that he wanted to sit in dust and ashes? It is apparent that Job has come face to face with the pride that had unwittingly overtaken him in some of the accusations he had made against God. Lamenting before God and inquiring of Him is legitimate; condemning and proudly railing against His wisdom is not. Realizing that he had reached the point of pride, which exalted his thinking above that of the Almighty, Job humbles himself, despises himself, and repents in dust and ashes.

But what about the meaning of the word *repent* in Job 42:6? The word used here is admittedly not the word "most frequently employed to indicate man's repentance, i.e., his turning from sin back to God (Harris 571). However, the word used here in Job's statement comes

from a Hebrew root which means “to sigh” or “breathe deeply”; to display the feelings of being sorry (Harris 571). Add to this the fact that dust and ashes, or sackcloth and ashes, are usually associated with repentance from sin (Est. 4:3; Dan. 9:3; Mat. 11:21; Luke 10:13), and a strong case can be made for understanding Job’s repentance here as involving his willingness to turn from the sin of pride which had overtaken him in the midst of his suffering.

To cry out to God with questions and bewilderment is one thing; to proudly call into question His infinite wisdom is quite another. A careful analysis of Job’s speeches demonstrates that Job crossed the line of acceptable lament by becoming proud and arrogant before Almighty God. Quite frankly, this author must confess amazement at the number of commentators who are willing to admit that Job became proud, but who are unwilling to admit that he sinned. Is not pride still a sin, and one of the things that God considers to be an abomination (Pro. 6:16-17)? If Job was guilty of pride and pride is still a sin, then it naturally follows that Job committed sin by making some of the arrogant statements that he did.

Keil and Delitzsch believed that Job repented of sin in this passage. Observe their explanation of the impact the Yahweh speeches had upon Job: “In this new light he can no longer deceive himself concerning God and concerning himself; the delusion of the conflict now yields to the vision of the truth, and **only penitential sorrow for his sin towards God remains to him**” (emphasis mine BJC) (382). Keil and Delitzsch also liken Job’s repentance to the godly sorrow of repentance not to be repented of mentioned by Paul in 2 Corinthians 7 (382). H. H. Rowley wrote, “Job’s repentance is not of any sin which had brought his suffering on him, such as the friends had called for. It was of the things he had said in ignorance in the course of the debate” (266). Wayne Jackson takes it a step further when he writes:

Job is sorry for his rash, though anguished words. We must remind ourselves that he is *not* repenting of the false charges that were

hurled against him by his accusers [e.g., abuse of the poor, adultery, idolatry, etc]; he had not been guilty of those sins. He is repenting of his *unjustified response* to the misfortune that had befallen him...As an evidence of his penitence, Job put dust upon his head (cf. 2:12) and sat in the ashes. Both of these acts were symbols of deep humility in times of loss or grief. Earlier the patriarch sat in the ashes because of what he lost physically (2:8), but now he is sitting in the ashes because of guilt for his sin. (92-93)

Hence, it is by no means a novel position to argue that Job sinned after he suffered by allowing pride to get the best of him in some of his pointed statements.

But it may be asked, "If Job was sinning in thinking and saying some of the things which he said, why did the Lord point to Job as having spoken that which was right, in contrast to the friends who spoke erroneously?" As Robert W. E. Forrest notes, "The ambiguity centres (sic) on the question what it is that Job has 'correctly' spoken that the friends have not" (159). It is a fair question and, in reply, it must first be pointed out that it is impossible that God is giving a wholesale endorsement of all that Job had said. A. B. Davidson wrote, "It is obvious that the three friends spoke many just and profound things concerning God, and that Job on the other hand said many things that were both blameworthy and false, things for which he was both rebuked by the Almighty, and expressed his penitence" (331).

Besides, "why would God appear theophanically in chs. 38-41 if all Job has said was correct" (Porter 292)? Remember that Job had condemned God (Job 40:8). If God intended for us to believe that everything that Job said were correct, then we would be compelled to conclude that God deserved condemnation. Obviously, there is a specific area in which Job spoke that which was right. The friends had argued, "suffering is always sent by God as a direct consequence

of sin, and in proportion thereto. Job denied such. In this matter, they were wrong and Job was right” (Jackson 93).

If we should go so far as to say that Job sinned against God in some of the pointed statements that he made, what are we really admitting? If we admit that Job sinned, i.e., he crossed the boundary line of acceptable questioning of God, are we therefore bound to admit that the friends were right all along in accusing Job of being a sinner? Not at all! There is a vast and fundamental difference between the argument of the friends and the admission that Job sinned in the midst of his suffering. The friends argued that Job was **suffering because he sinned**. Contrariwise, it is possible to conclude that Job **sinned because he suffered**. On the one hand, sin is seen as the cause of Job's suffering. On the other hand, sin is seen as one of the effects of Job's suffering.

Is it possible that our zeal to defend Job from the rash and unfair accusations of his friends has also blinded us to the reality of his proud and unwarranted accusations against God? Quite naturally, when we look at Job's plight, we are deeply moved with emotion and empathy for him. However, we should be careful not to defend some of Job's outrageous statements merely because we feel sorry for him and because we disdain the diatribe of his friends.

In the next place, it should be observed that admitting that Job went too far in some of his statements against God is not tantamount to disqualifying Job as a hero of the faith, and a man worthy of imitation. A cursory glance at the “Hall Of Faith” in Hebrews 11 reminds us that many men and women, whose feet were made of clay, are still excellent role models for us to mimic in the overall scheme of things. Abraham was on more than one occasion a liar, but those events do not disqualify him from being our example in the arena of faith. At one time Sarah laughed at the power of God to bring her a son in her old age, but she later recanted and put her faith and trust in Him. Moses rebelled against God and allowed pride to get the better of him when he failed to sanctify the Lord at Kadesh (Num. 20:1-15). His sin cost him a trip to the earthly Promised Land, but it did not eliminate him as a role model in other areas.

And what about Rahab the harlot? Does the fact that she was listed in Hebrews 11 as an example of great faith imply that she was sinless? Why does the writer of Hebrews 11 mention Samson and David as examples of great faith? Did he not know of their shortcomings? Of course he did. Was the apostle Peter a perfect man? Did he always use his tongue in the right way? Obviously, he did not. Does this fact thereby disqualify Peter as a worthy example in other areas of his life?

Accordingly, the same argument could be made with reference to Job. The mention of Job as an example of great endurance (Jam. 5:10-11) does not necessarily imply that he was sinless and worthy of imitation in every other area of his life. To say that Job sinned by becoming proud is not to say that we would have or could have done any better than he did. I suspect that the vast majority of us would have said and done far worse than did Job. Though Job did bitterly complain against God, and though he received rebuke from God for it, the fact remains that Job never ever let go of his quest to be reconciled to God. He never completely severed ties from God, even in his darkest hour. He never did what Satan bargained that he would do. In this respect, he is worthy of commendation and imitation.

God heard what the friends said. Once Job opened his mouth, the friends felt compelled to respond. Warren Wiersbe does a good job of summarizing their individual emphasis in their speeches to Job:

Four other men are involved in this drama, all of them friends of Job. Keep in mind that the events in this book cover several months (7:3) and that friends and neighbors discussed Job's case (6:15; 12:4; 16:10; 17:1-9). Eliphaz from Teman was the first speaker, and he based all his ideas on a "spiritual experience" he had one night (4:12-16). Bildad was a "traditionalist" who knew some "wise sayings" and tried to build

a case on them. Like Eliphaz, he was certain Job was a hypocrite. Zophar was very dogmatic and certain that he knew more about God than anyone else. Each of these men argued with Job, and he argued back. At the end (chaps. 32–37), a new voice appeared, that of the younger man Elihu, who waited until his elders had spoken before advancing his ideas. While the three older men insisted that God always blessed the righteous and judged the wicked, Elihu said that God sometimes chastened (not punished) the righteous in His own will. He asked Job to submit to God and trust Him, but his attitude was still that of a judge and a critic. When God did appear, He made no reference to Elihu's great speeches at all! (Expository Outlines)

Because the friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar) held the distorted view that all suffering is caused by personal sin, they were absolutely convinced that Job brought his suffering upon himself because of sin in his life. Eliphaz started out politely enough, but things quickly degenerated. Eliphaz intimated that Job's sinfulness was the reason all of his children died (Job 5:4). Bildad implied that Job's children died because they were so sinful (Job 8:4), and Zophar had the audacity to come right out and say, "Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth" (Job 11:6). When Job refused to identify specific sins he had committed, which the friends claimed brought on his suffering, his friends began accusing him of committing all kinds of different sins. It is no wonder that Job called his friends "miserable comforters" (Job 16:2; cf. Job 21:34).

At the end of the book, God confronts Eliphaz and says, "My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath" (Job 42:7). Although the friends of Job no doubt thought of themselves

as defenders of the truth on sin and suffering, God heard their false words and held them accountable for their false theology.

He Knows What We Do Not Know

Once again it is important to remember that God knew things about Job's suffering that even Job did not know for a time, or maybe ever. During the period of Job's suffering, there were definitely some "secret things that belonged unto the Lord" (Deu. 29:29). In fact, that may be one of the main emphases of the book—namely that the reasons for human suffering often remain a secret to humans.

The major reality of the book is the inscrutable mystery of innocent suffering. God ordains that His children walk in sorrow and pain, sometimes because of sin (cf. Num. 12:10–12), sometimes for chastening (cf. Heb. 12:5–12), sometimes for strengthening (cf. 2 Cor. 12:7–10; 1 Pet. 5:10), and sometimes to give opportunity to reveal His comfort and grace (2 Cor. 1:3–7). But there are times when the compelling issue in the suffering of the saints is unknowable because it is for a heavenly purpose that those on earth can't discern (cf. Ex. 4:11; John 9:1–3). (MacArthur Study Bible)

Even if we have not faced the same tragedies as did Job, the truth is that tough times are coming for all of us. Things will happen in our futures that will cause us to wonder why. In those times when we do not understand, we must allow the things that we do understand to see us through. For instance, I understand that this world did not make itself. I understand that someone very powerful and knowledgeable put it all together. Therefore, even when I do not understand why things happen in life, I bow before the One Who understands all things. I do not know what He knows; I cannot do what He has done; therefore, I trust that He knows more than I do.

We Learn That God, And Only God, Is All-Wise

Throughout the book there is a constant battle between Job and his friends over which of their views is truly the wise view. Job spoke sarcastically to his accusers and said, “No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you. But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you: yea, who knoweth not such things as these” (Job 12:2-3)? In Job 15:2, Eliphaz retorted, “Should a wise man utter vain knowledge, and fill his belly with the east wind?” He then asked Job in a mocking manner, “Art thou the first man that was born? Or wast thou made before the hills? Hast thou heard the secret of God? And dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself? What knowest thou, that we know not? What understandest thou, which is not in us? With us are both the grayheaded and very aged men, much elder than thy father” (Job 15:7-10). Eliphaz then promised Job that he would show him things which wise men have told from their fathers and passed on to others (Job 15:18).

In Job's final speech, he acknowledged correctly that the true source of wisdom is located in God (Job 28:20-23). It is God who understandeth the way thereof, and He knoweth the place thereof (Job 28:23). True wisdom did not originate in Job, the friends, or even Elihu. True wisdom originated in Almighty God!

He Understands What We Cannot Understand

There were many things Job could not understand by his own human wisdom. Moreover, the human wisdom of the friends was leading them in the wrong direction, doctrinally speaking. The friends could not understand how Job could be suffering so much if he were living righteously. Job could not understand why he was suffering so much when he knew that he had been trying to live an upright life.

Ironically, the Job who could not understand what was happening to him is the same Job who thought at times that he possessed superior wisdom to Almighty God when it comes to running the universe. He longed to have a one-on-one meeting with God, wherein he could present his arguments and get some answers

(Job 23:3-7). Job got his one-on-one meeting with God, but it did not turn out the way he had anticipated.

As noted earlier, God spoke to Job out of the whirlwind. He peppered Job with one question after another, asking Job to explain how to make a universe. The design of these questions was to cause Job to realize he did not know as much as he thought he knew about how to run the universe, considering he could not even make one.

Job did not know the answer to a single question in round one, so God told him to get ready for round two. He said to Job, “Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? He that reproveth God, let him answer it” (Job 40:1-2). At this point, Job confessed that he was out of his league. He promised to put his hand over his mouth and quit talking. Interestingly, God wanted to drive His point home with emphasis, so He answered him out of the storm again, “Gird up thy loins now like a man: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?” (Job 40:6-8).

Then God asked Job, “Does your arm have the same strength as the strength in my arm? Can you make your voice thunder like my voice?” One question after another came forth from God’s Divine mouth and Job could answer not one of them. The essence of His Divine line of questioning was “Job, can you do this? Do you know how to do this? Do you know how to do that? Can you conquer this creature that I made? If you cannot conquer even one of the largest creatures I have made, what makes you think your knowledge can conquer mine?”

He Understands That We Cannot Always Understand

One reason that God was gracious with Job, in spite of some the things he had said, was because God understood that Job could not understand from an earthly perspective the heavenly realities of what was happening to him. God understands that we are frail human beings.

The prose sections of Job (chapters 1–2 and 42) show that human behavior is on display

before supernatural powers. The poetic sections (chapters 3–41) show that, however logical it appears, human reasoning alone can never penetrate to the mind of God. Job and his counselors reached only partial truth about suffering, and only when God revealed himself did the inadequacy of human wisdom become evident. (Easley 112-13)

In His conversation with Job, God really does not even address the issue of explaining why the righteous man sometimes suffers. He focuses instead on the issue of wisdom. He alone is wise, and His wisdom should always be trusted as superior to our own. By asking Job a series of rapid-fire questions, none of which Job can answer, God sent Job a powerful message—"I am wiser than you are, so when in doubt, trust me! I know what I am doing."

We Learn That God, And Only God, Is All Holy

Job was a very righteous man, but of all the characters we read of in the book, only God is Omni-righteous. He is all holy, all of the time (Cf. 1 Pet. 1:17). This sets Him apart from every other character in the book, and from every accountable human being, for that matter. Because He is holy...

He Has Never Done What He Should Not Do

Job's suffering was not caused by sin, but he acknowledged that there were times when he had done what he should not have done. Although he was not guilty of the things his friends trumped up against him, he did acknowledge the iniquities of his youth (Job 13:26). There has never been a time when God did something He should not have done—not 50 years ago, 500 years ago, or 5000 years ago! Furthermore, because He is holy...

He Has Never Said What He Should Not Say

We have already noted some of the improper words spoken by Job and the three friends. The friends spent so much time focusing on the imagined wrongdoings of Job that they failed to focus on

their own shortcomings. God said that they had not spoken of Him the things that are right. Job got so defensive in defending himself against the attacks and charges of his friends that he began to lash out, even at God.

In contrast to the sins committed by Job and his friends, God has never said something He should not have said. He has always employed the right words. Even when He confronted Job for some of his statements, God did so in a measured manner. He was firm without being hateful. One of the quickest paths to sin is by the improper use of our tongues. Yet, in all the words He has ever spoken, God has always said the right thing and never said the wrong thing!

We Learn That God, And Only God, Is All-Powerful

Job was powerless to do anything at all about his condition. He did not possess the power to reverse his losses and make everything better again. His wife was powerless to do anything either. His friends were powerless to change his circumstances for the better. The power they did have in their tongues—to speak an encouraging word—lay dormant while they chose instead to use their tongues in a very hurtful way toward Job.

There is only one all-powerful being in the book of Job, and that is Almighty God. Satan had some power, but he was not all-powerful. He could not exercise any power over Job without Divine permission. The power of Almighty God is on display, especially in the speeches God makes to Job. What do we learn about the power of God in Job?

He Has Done What We Cannot Do

The essence of the dialogue between God and Job in Job 38-42 is that because God has done what we cannot do, we ought to trust Him. There were times when Job thought he could run the universe in a fairer way than God. He thought he could do what God could not do. Essentially, God says to Job, “How can you be qualified to do what you think I cannot do when you cannot even do what I have already done in the past?”

Anytime we start to question God, we should read Job 38-41, list all of the things that God did in Creation, and then set about to accomplish the same by creating a Universe of our own. If you can create a Universe exactly like the one you are living in, then you may have the credibility to question the wisdom of the Creator of this one. If you cannot create a Universe, then you should bow in reverence to the Creator of this one.

If you cannot, or do not want to, create your own Universe, then just read and answer all of the questions God asked Job (Job 38-41) and when you have satisfactorily explained how God did what He did, then you will be approaching a level where you could begin to commence to start thinking about questioning His judgment. Or, there is another option, and that is to bow in submission and awe before the Creator, and to trust His infinite wisdom to be right even when it does not seem right to your finite mind.

He Can Do What We Cannot Do

As human beings, we cannot do what God can do as a Divine Being. He possesses power to do what we cannot do. Sometimes the situation looks bleak and hopeless to us because we are looking at it through strictly earthbound glasses. We need to lift our eyes up to the One Who is up above. He is able to do exceedingly, abundantly, above all that we may ask or think (Eph. 3:20). His resume speaks for itself (Gen. 18:14; Luke 1:37).

The power of God had a profound effect upon Job. When he came face to face with the power of God, he completely changed his viewpoint.

Job cried for an audience with God to argue his case. But when God appeared and Job saw his majesty and glory he ceased to be bothered by the problem of suffering. In the presence of God his complaints all vanished away and only God was left. There were no more doubts as to God's reality and power and goodness. It is as though Job, who was looking for an answer,

now in the presence of God is satisfied just to know there is an answer. This appears to be the ultimate message of the book of Job in regard to the problem of suffering. (Paschall and Hobbs 269-70)

God's revelation of Himself seems inadequate to those who demand to know the reason for all things. But it is enough for Job. The sufferer now accepts his position as a creature and bows before the Creator. Having seen the Lord, Job makes no claim to righteousness, but simply submits to the Lord. (*Hayford Bible Handbook*)

We Learn That God, And Only God, Is Worthy Of Worship

As we study the book of Job, if we are not careful, we can become so preoccupied looking for the answer to the question of why the righteous suffer that we miss the bigger picture. Wiersbe illustrates this very point in his synopsis of the book of Job:

The basic question is not "Why do the righteous suffer?" (there are many answers to that question) but "Is our God worthy of our worship and service, or must He 'buy' us with His blessings?" Satan was not only slandering Job; he was also slandering the Lord! He was saying, "God would not have any followers if He did not reward them!" (*With the Word Bible Commentary*)

The Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary also weighs in with this :

The book of Job probes the hearts of believers, uncovering the reasons why they follow God. Do believers follow God because of the benefits he

gives or out of a deep love and sacrificial reverence for God? Satan was taught a lesson: the nature and person of God himself should be enough to motivate human devotion. The book teaches that God must be appreciated by believers, even in their suffering. Creation reveals God's power, not his righteousness. And that revelation shows that God is so much greater and wiser than anything created, including the human race, that no one has a legitimate excuse not to worship him. (Hughes and Laney 188)

The message of Job is that God is worthy to be praised, whether He blesses us or not—because He is God, and we are not. He deserves our worship when times are good. He deserves our worship when times are tough. He is always worthy of praise (Psa. 18:3).

We Learn That God, And Only God, Is Sovereign

A large number of commentators would affirm that the sovereignty of God is the chief message of the book of Job.

Perhaps this is the greatest lesson of the book: that God is completely sovereign in our lives and does not have to explain His ways to us. God works out His purposes (Rom. 8:28), and this is all that matters. When trials come, we should not ask, “How can I get out of this?” but “Lord, what can I get out of this?” (*Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament*)

We must accept the fact that God does not always provide us with neat and tidy explanations about why certain things happen in life. God is sovereign. He does not owe us any explanations. “We cannot understand His workings by rational thinking alone; faith must rest in God's love and our knowledge of Him. Sovereignty

means that God is all-powerful; He knows all, He is everywhere present, and His decision is final (Jer. 10:10; Dan. 4:17). God is the author of all the power of the universe” (Hayford).

The following outstanding quote, from J. Sidlow Baxter, well summarizes the sovereignty of God as the key feature of the book:

Herein lies the message of the book: there was an explanation, but Job did not know it, and was not meant to know it. Because of failure to appreciate this, the book has been said by some to present a problem without a solution (Marvin H. Pope, *Job in The Anchor Bible*, p. LXVIII.); but when we see that the central theme is really only one aspect of the problem—Why do the godly suffer?—the book is far from presenting a problem without a solution. The solution is clearly stated in the prologue: God permitted Job’s trials to prove that a person could love God for Himself without thought of reward, and that a loving, sovereign God is always in control though our own knowledge and understanding are limited. (Hindson and Kroll)

Because God is sovereign,

Job thus realizes that God does not need man’s advice to control the world and that no extreme of suffering gives man the right to question God’s wisdom or justice, and on this he repents (42:2–6). On seeing the power and glory of God, Job’s rebellious attitude dissolves and his resentment disappears. Job now gets what he sought for. His friends do not see him pronounced guilty; so their view of his suffering is refuted. (Smick 860-61)

We Learn That God, And Only God, Is All-Loving

There is no outpouring of love and affection from Job's wife on display in the pages of the book of Job. Nor do we see loving attitudes gushing forth from the friends toward Job, once we get past the first seven days of their time together. However, as we pause and reflect upon the content of the book of Job, we learn that God is indeed omnibenevolent.

He Loves Us When We Do Not Deserve To Be Loved

Considering some of the things Job said to God in the midst of his suffering, we should pause to reflect on how loving and gracious God was to forgive Job and shower blessings upon him again. If a member of the church said some of the same things to us that Job said to God, how quick would we be to understand that some of those things were said in the midst of agonizing pain? How long would we hold a grudge? How quickly would we be disposed to forgive and forget? I have seen brethren have a permanent falling out with another brother over far less hurtful things said than what we read in some of the words Job spoke to God. Yet, after Job put his hand over his mouth and repented in dust and ashes (Job 42:1-6), God freely forgave him. He did not give Job the cold shoulder and hold a grudge against him. On the contrary, he blessed him even more than He had before (Job 42:12-17). God showed grace to Job and loved him even when he did not deserve to be loved.

He Loves Us Even When We Do Not Sense His Love

Before tragedy invaded Job's life, he must have looked at all of the material possessions he had, and the family that he enjoyed, and he must have felt the warmth and love of God in the enjoyment thereof. After tragedy struck his life, Job felt an increasing sense of alienation from God. He felt disconnected from the love and presence of God. In reality, God did not love him any less than He did before his suffering began. Job did not realize it during his suffering, but God never quit loving him. When tough times come our way, Satan would love for us to start doubting God's love. Let us remember to cling patiently to God, knowing that His love will be even more apparent in time to come.

He Loved Us By Giving Us The Greatest Gift Of His Love

We do not have to wonder in silence about whether God loves us. He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to suffer in our stead (John 3:16). By becoming flesh and dwelling among us, and dying for us, God has participated in human suffering (John 1:1; John 1:14; 1 John 3:16). Knowles elaborates:

We see God involved in human suffering. God comes to us, not with smooth excuses or brisk retorts, but in the shape of his dreadfully rejected and brutally murdered Son. All our indignant questions and challenges fall silent in the presence of Christ on his cross, the crucified God. (220-21)

The connection between the suffering of Job and the suffering of Jesus is spelled out very well in the following quotation:

The New Testament brings us to a deeper understanding of God's dealings with suffering. In Jesus Christ he reveals his love toward his sinful creatures by sending his Son to die on the cross. Jesus Christ is the true innocent sufferer, the only one completely without sin. He voluntarily (as opposed to Job) submits himself to suffering for the benefit of sinful men and women. As Andersen (1976, 73) states it, "That the Lord himself has embraced and absorbed the undeserved consequences of evil is the final answer to Job and all the Jobs of humanity." In Jesus, God enters into the world of human suffering in order to redeem humanity. Jesus experienced the height of human suffering on the cross, and he did so without complaining. The early Christian community saw the

connection between Job and Jesus, so it was a common practice to read the book of Job during Passion week (Delitzsch 1975, 32). (Longman and Dillard 235-36)

Conclusion

We are not suggesting that human suffering came to an end when Jesus died on the cross. However, it is comforting for us to know that our Savior understands human suffering. He has experienced it emotionally and physically and thus He understands what we are going through (2 Cor. 1:3-11).

In the meantime, when there are no rational, or even theological, explanations for disaster and pain, our only course of action is to trust tenaciously in God. The way to cope with suffering is not so much in finding out why we are suffering, but in finding out who God is and clinging to Him come what may, knowing that the end the Lord has in mind for us will surpass our wildest dreams! Whatever we have to go through in this life, Heaven will surely be worth it all (Rom. 8:18)!

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CHAPTER 20

A Daysman Betwixt Us: What Job Wanted And What We Have

Stephen Sutton

Sincere gratitude is expressed to the elders, deacons, ministers, and members of the Southaven church of Christ for their effort and support shown toward this excellent series of studies. We are thankful for Wade Webster and his work. Before a man can be a good preacher, he must first be a good man. Wade is a good man with a wonderful family. They are known, loved, and appreciated by many. The theme “Job: A Man Who Lost Everything Except His Faith” is sure to be an encouraging and enriching study.

The book of Job is tremendous, inspired literature. Its conversations and principles of endurance during suffering are helpful to the Christian living in a difficult world. Numerous aspects could be examined and noted; however, in this writing we will endeavor to delve into a relationship that Job desired to have with God.

What Job Had

There is a tremendous progression of Job’s spiritual growth as seen through the book of Job chapters nine, thirteen, sixteen, and nineteen. Job cried out, as recorded in Job 9:33, that basically he has no hope (King James Version). He did not have anyone, i.e., a daysman, who could place his hand on Job’s shoulder and on the shoulder of God (definition of *daysman*: to plead, argue, or judge

from Hebrew Strong's). He continues to despair as he feels as if there is just no hope.

Why was this relationship important to Job? Destruction has come to Mr. and Mrs. Job. Their wealth (animals) and their “pride and joy” (children) were taken away from them. Job only had his wife, his faith, and a few unwise friends. There was still an itch that Job could not scratch! He wanted a day in the courtroom of God as he sought to understand why these tragic and traumatic events transpired.

We all long for someone who can understand our condition, who can understand our pain and who can understand our difficult decisions. We love the thought of having someone who understands and sympathizes with us. Job certainly desires this relationship as he seeks understanding as to these previous events that turned his world upside down. This writer does not want someone pleading his case that does not understand him and the temptations he faces. Therefore, this relationship is superiorly essential.

In Job 13:19, Job asks “Who is he that will plead with me? For now, if I hold my tongue, I shall give up the ghost.” Job is saying that there will be someone to stand by him and defend him. He does not quite know who, but someone will defend him. Even in this thirteenth chapter, we see the man Job still clinging to the idea of a mediator confident of the fact that someone would defend him.

In Job 16:19, Job declares, “Also now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high.” Job had an exalted witness and his witness is God...but which person of the Godhead is it? This word *witness* carries with it the idea of someone to testify on his behalf.

Continuing in Job 16:21, “O that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleadeth for his neighbor!” Typically one would and should plead for his neighbor; this someone would stand up for someone like Job. Here is a reference to Christ! A neighbor can plead for a neighbor because they are on the same level. Jesus perfectly fits the bill to plead to God on man's behalf. Someone is going to defend Job before God and that person is going to be his “next of kin.” This

“neighbor” is equal to him but exalted at the same time. He is God and man! This God-man is going to see his blood and experience what Job experienced. Could this be a prophecy regarding the incarnation of Jesus Christ our Lord? In this sixteenth chapter of this great book, Job progresses in his faith and becomes confident that the One who will stand with him is the “God-man.”

And finally, in Job 19:2, Job cries out expressing his disgust. In Job 19:22, Job begins to believe that he has suffered enough as he asks God the very common “why” question. After asking why, in Job 19:25, he declares “For I know that my Redeemer liveth and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.” Job has just about had enough and wishes there would be Someone to defend his innocence and wishes that the things he has done would be written and last forever. He recognizes in this chapter that his Redeemer lives (this word *redeemer* is the same word Job used in chapter nine verse thirty-three *daysman*). Christ will come to the earth and will stand up for him. Job declared, “I KNOW”!

What We Have

This writer is generally a friend to those who understand him. He longs for relationships with those who have the same background, same problems, and the same temptations as he. Our desire to seek common ground with God is fulfilled in Christ Jesus our Lord! He is the perfect Mediator for us!

First Timothy 2:5 states, “There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” Winton defines the word *mediator* as one who “stands between two parties who are in disagreement.” Our lives were in disagreement with the perfect will of God! What we need is reconciliation! However, our Mediator is sympathetic to both sides of the disagreement. He is God and He is also man. Therefore, He understands Heaven’s side and He understands the fleshly side as well.

Jesus is the only Mediator who can stand between God and man. No one else can produce the necessary qualifications to serve in this role: no man, no angel, and no, not even Satan himself! Christ

is not the cause of this disagreement because He is without sin (Heb. 4:15, 1 Pet. 2:22).

How is it that Christ can help reconcile us back to God? While Christ is not the reason for the separation, he certainly is acquainted with all the details of this fall. He was present when the commandment was handed down from God and in attendance when Adam and Eve were dismissed from the presence of God. He is very familiar with all the details of our problem. Therefore, He understands what is necessary to put us back into fellowship with the Father. Thank God for this very important work for which Christ is perfectly and uniquely qualified.

Conclusion

It is therefore no surprise to us that man's greatest problem is separation from God and man's greatest need is reconciliation. Jesus Christ offers His services as mediator to all those who humbly and obediently submit to the will of God. Because we access the Father through Him and because He pleads our case and because we are His—we do not despair as Job did (Job 9:33) but rather confidently rejoice in the great mediatory work of Christ Jesus our Lord!

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CHAPTER 21

It May Be That My Sons Have Sinned, And Cursed God In Their Hearts: The Hidden Affairs Of The Heart

Paul Meacham, Jr.

In the pages of Holy Writ, we encounter a truly remarkable man, Job. Our Divine introduction to him informs us that he “was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil” (Job 1:1). How great would be our station in life if the same could be written about us. Well, that is possible. If we study the lessons of Job’s life and emulate his righteous thoughts and behaviors, there is no reason we cannot hear, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Mat. 25:21). In this chapter, we will apply ourselves to two great lessons we can learn from Job. First, we will explore the role of courage in parenting. Second, we will seek to understand the relationship between man’s thoughts and his behaviors that we might better master both.

Courage of One Who Knows His Children

Job demonstrated great courage by acknowledging the possibility that his grown children could sin and by offering sacrifices on their behalf. Job’s acknowledgement that his children might have sinned in their hearts tells us much about Job and his children. We can surmise that Job was engaged enough in his children’s lives to know that their behaviors were righteous. If they had been living outwardly sinful lives, Job would have made sacrifice for those sins without having to consider if they had sinned in their hearts. We are also impressed by the fact that Job was courageous enough to

acknowledge that his children were capable of sin. Many parents have such a blind spot where their children are concerned that they behave as though it were not possible that their children could commit sin, inwardly or outwardly.

I recall an occasion when the mother of two teenage girls from my Sunday morning Bible class brought to my attention that the deacons and their wives had all congregated at the home of one of the deacons for a pool party (later described to me by the host as men and women gathering around the pool in bathing suits to swim and to eat and to play games). Her daughters were confused and hurt because their mother had taught them that such mixed bathing was sinful, and they had, therefore, expected better of these adults. It so happened that the host couple were the daughter and son-in-law of one of the elders. When I asked this elder about the party, he very curtly informed me that his daughter was a fine Christian woman. Therefore, whatever they did was alright. It struck me immediately and has always stayed with me that he approved of their behavior based on his judgment that they were Christians rather than judging their behavior to see if it was consistent with how a Christian should behave. He would not accept or even consider that it was possible that his child could do wrong. Job had the courage first to acknowledge that his children might have done wrong in their hearts and then to take the appropriate actions to address the situation. Both life and the Bible give us examples of fathers who fell far short of this mark.

Not All Bible Fathers Were Equally Courageous

King David, a righteous man in many respects, often failed in his duties as a father. He fathered a son with one of his wives named Haggith and named the boy Adonijah. The boy's name meant "Jehovah is my master." The laudable name seems to indicate that David wanted his son to be Jehovah's subject. However, David raised a boy who served no one but himself. Late in David's life and again early in Solomon's reign, Adonijah tried to take the throne by usurpation. His upbringing is described as "his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so?" (1 Kin. 1:6). In other words, Adonijah was always allowed to do whatever he wanted. His

father took no steps to act in his best interest and restrain him from unrighteous behavior.

Eli, the High Priest of Israel, is described as being guilty of a similar failing. He raised two sons who misused their priestly offices to the extent that they “lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation,” and made “the LORD’s people to transgress” (1 Sam. 2:22-25). Eli “heard all that his sons did unto all Israel” (1 Sam. 2:22), and he knew that “his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not” (1 Sam. 3:13). For this failing in the days of Solomon, Jehovah removed the high priesthood from Eli’s family by thrusting “out Abiathar from being priest unto the LORD; that he might fulfil the word of the LORD, which he spake concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh” (1 Kin. 2:27). Eli had a spiritual responsibility as the High Priest to deal with these wicked priests who happened to be his sons, and he did not. By contrast, Job had a spiritual responsibility under the patriarchal system to make sacrifices for his family, and he bravely met that responsibility.

Parents Today Must Be Courageous in Raising Their Children

While we today live under a different law than did Job or Eli or David, the basic responsibilities of raising righteous children still require courageous parenting. In no area is this more apparent than in a parent’s responsibility to provide both correcting and guiding discipline for their children. As emotionally taxing as the process can be, parents have a relatively narrow developmental window in which they can effect dramatic, positive change in their children’s lives through physical discipline. The good that can be done must outweigh the distress the moment brings to the loving parent. “Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying” (Pro. 19:18). No parent who respects the Bible as God’s Word should have any question regarding whether or not God intended for parents to include physical correction, spanking, as part of this discipline process. God’s wisdom instructs us, “Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell” (Pro. 23:13-14). I have seen Christian parents recoil

at the thought of spanking their children. I have even had Christian parents tell me directly, “I know the Bible says that sometimes parents should spank their children, but I could never do that.” I wonder if these parents understand what they are really saying.

The Bible says, “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes” (Pro. 13:24). Therefore, parents who withhold needed physical correction do not love their children enough to do what is in the children’s best interest. The Bible says, “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him” (Pro. 22:15). Therefore, parents who withhold needed physical correction are making an intentional choice to leave their children in the disadvantaged (foolish) state of having to learn lessons later in life when stakes are much higher and costs much greater. These are often lessons that could have and should have been learned earlier for the cost of a momentary sting.

If you are contemplating having children, yet reading these passages you know that you do not have the emotional constitution to correct and discipline your children as God directs, do not have children. I realize how extreme that may sound to many. However, trying to raise children to be men and women of God without following God’s directions for accomplishing this task is misguided and will surely lead to shameful failure (Pro. 29:15).

Comprehension of One Who Understands Sin ***Man’s Heart Is the Seat of Sinful Behavior***

In accounting for the possibility that his children had sinned in their hearts, Job demonstrated an understanding of the inherent relationship between the inward man (man’s thoughts) and the observable man (man’s behaviors). Solomon characterized the thought-behavior relationship as being a fundamental component to assessing who and what we really are. “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Pro. 4:23). Job understood this thought-behavior relationship and was concerned about the condition of his children’s hearts.

That Jehovah wants us to understand the value of guarding our hearts is emphasized by the many times Jesus instructed man regarding the thought-behavior relationship. Jesus chastised the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and scribes by calling to account their feigned pious behavior while they continually cultivated hearts filled with selfishness and greed (Mark 7:5-13). It should be noted that despite the Pharisees' efforts to cloak their evil thoughts in pious appearing behaviors their behaviors did, in fact, evidence their evil hearts. Consider some of the accusations made against them by the Righteous Judge. They "shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in" (Mat. 23:13). Their practice was to "devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer" (Mat. 23:14). The Pharisees would "compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made...make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves" (Mat. 23:15). Their greed was so great that they would "say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor" (Mat. 23:16)! They were meticulous enough to "pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin," and yet they "omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith" (Mat. 23:23). As we will see later, the character of our thoughts eventually becomes the reality of our behaviors.

Jesus' corrective instruction to the Pharisees was clear. "There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man" (Mark 7:15). He further explained, "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man" (Mark 7:21-23). Two of the eight "woes" Jesus pronounced against the scribes and Pharisees (Mat. 23) were concerned with this inexorable connection between man's sinful thoughts and his sinful behaviors. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and

of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess” (Mat. 23:25), and “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness” (Mat. 23:27). Jesus adjudged these leaders of the Jews to be hypocrites because they behaved as though no connection existed between what they thought and what they were. Whereas, God has declared, “as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Pro. 23:7).

The Bible, however, does more than just identify an extant relationship between man’s thoughts and his behaviors; it describes it as being causal in nature. That man’s thoughts are the progenitors of his eventual behaviors is clearly explained in the recounting of the sins of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). Desiring to receive the praise of man while retaining the revenue from the sale of their land, they lied. Lying is sinful behavior (Lev. 6:2-5; Pro. 14:5; John 8:44; Col. 3:9; 1 John 1:6-10; Rev. 21:27), and Ananias and Sapphira lied (Acts 5:3-4; Acts 5:8). But where did this sinful behavior get its start? It began as sinful thought. Examine the questions Peter asked Ananias. “Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost” (Acts 5:3)? “Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart” (Acts 5:4)? It was the conception of this evil in their hearts that gave birth to the wicked lies they told. Job’s concern for the condition of his children’s hearts demonstrated not only his courage in facing the possibility that his children could sin, but also his understanding of the precursory relationship of man’s thoughts to his behaviors.

Man’s Heart, Not Just Man’s Behavior, Will Be Judged by God

Lest I leave the false impression that man need only ensure that his evil thoughts do not become action, let me state plainly, evil thoughts can be sinful in and of themselves. We might recognize a fleeting evil thought and immediately defeat and expel it. However, it is vital that we understand that evil thoughts that are cultivated and hoarded away, even if we believe they have not been manifested as sinful behaviors, will still be called into account by the “Judge of all the earth” (Gen. 18:25). Let us first consider man’s condition if he

were able to harbor evil within his heart and yet control his behavior to such an extent that no observable sinful behavior was exhibited. Could he then approach judgment with confidence knowing he had successfully hidden his dark heart? No!

Jehovah consistently and constantly declares that man's heart is always open before Him. Through the prophet Jeremiah, He warned evil Jerusalem that he knew and would judge their hearts. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jer. 17:9-10). We have been assured that false teachers and evil doers can be identified by examining that which they produce—their fruit (Mat. 7:15-20). Man's fruit is, therefore, representative of his observable behaviors. However, notice that in Jehovah's warning to Jerusalem, He made no distinction between His ability to know and judge the inward man ("hearts" and "reins") and the outward man ("ways" and the "fruit of his doings"). Both are equally open to Jehovah's observation and judgment. By inspiration, the sweet psalmist of Israel came to understand that God "knowest my downsitting and mine uprising," He "understandest my thought afar off." He "compasseth my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether" (Psa. 139:2-4).

To the righteous, Jehovah's intimate knowledge of man is a guiding, protecting comfort (Psa. 139:8-10), but to the wicked it is a warning that things we think are hidden in our hearts are only temporarily obscured from man's view. "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God" (1 Cor. 4:5). We should know that even when we have successfully hidden our true selves from man God knows our hearts. "And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15).

Conclusion

Job was truly a remarkable man. He possessed the courage to love his children even while acknowledging that they were capable of sin. He also understood the nature of sinful thought and its relationship to sinful behaviors. The combination of his courage and comprehension prompted him to hold himself and his children to the higher standard of assessing the condition of the inward man and offering sacrifices based on the possibility of sins he could not yet observe. There is indeed much to emulate in “perfect and upright” Job (Job 1:1). If we could but follow him in these two areas, we would change for the better the way think about our relationships with our children and our standing before Jehovah.

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CHAPTER 22

Job And His Times: An Introduction To The Man And The Book

Garland Elkins

Job, though under such great pressure and perplexed, along with almost unbearable pain and sorrow, nevertheless was confident that he would come forth from his trial as gold. He maintained his integrity until the end. In like manner, each of us as Christians should be living in such a way that we, too, will come forth as gold. Job said, “But he knoweth the way that I take: When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (American Standard Version, Job 23:10).

The book of Job is a rich and valuable study, helpful in every way. In fact the Old Testament is written for our learning; “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope” (Rom. 15:4). We are explicitly told in the New Testament to “take the example of Job.”

Take, brethren, for an example of suffering and of patience, the prophets who spake in the name of the Lord. Behold, we call them blessed that endured: ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, how that the Lord is full of pity, and merciful. (Jam. 5:10-11)

Who Was Job?

Job was a man who actually existed in history just as we exist. He lived in the land of Uz, a place located east of Palestine. The land should not be confused with the land of Ur of Chaldea, the original home of Abraham. Job was also a patriarch. He lived in the patriarchal age.

The Date Of The Book Of Job

There are many infallible reasons which could be given for the early date of the book of Job. Among them are the Arminianism in the language of the book, and the over two hundred years of life of Job. Neither is there any mentioning of Jewish institutions and worship, the description of Job's wealth, the patriarchal worship and family descriptions, the existence of the name of Job in 2000 B.C. documents, the absence of historical events from Abraham onward, the early forms of idolatry mentioned, the descriptions of court scenes, the absence of a formal priesthood, the Sabeans and Chaldeans still roaming marauders, or the units of money described in early terms. Job's wealth is described in some terms as that of other patriarchs by Moses (Gen. 13:1-2; Gen. 13:5-6)—the daughters inheriting with the brothers, though not permitted in Judaism (Num. 27:8). Other infallible reasons which could be given for the early date of the book include references to the universal flood. Thus Job lived in the "starlight" age of the world. He did not have the advantages of the "moonlight" (Mosaic dispensation). He certainly did not enjoy the privileges of the "sunlight" (Christian dispensation).

Job was a family man with a wife and ten children, seven sons and three daughters. When one observes that they celebrated each one's birthday together, and they worshipped together, Job placed important value on his children and is evident when his children are mentioned first among his many possessions.

Job was a man of great riches. He was "the greatest of all the children of the east" (Job 1:3). His possessions included "seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household" to

look after his great possessions (Job 1:3). In today's economy, the amount of his wealth would be a billion dollars.

Job was a man of great character for God Himself said of Job, "There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God; and turneth away from evil" (Job 1:8).

After having been so richly blessed by God because of his righteous life, and that over such a long period of time also having been blessed of God with so many children and so many other blessings from God, this caused Job to say, "I shall die in my nest. And I shall multiply my days as the sand" (Job 29:18). Instead of this happening, he would be destroyed "without cause" (Job 2:13).

Devices Used By Satan To Destroy Job

Paul wrote, "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3). God asked Satan, "Hast thou considered my servant Job?" (Job 1:8). Of course Satan had considered Job since we are told, "Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8).

Paul also wrote, "That no advantage may be gained over us by Satan: for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Cor. 2:11).

1. Satan takes away his physical possessions one by one (Job 1:10-17).

2. Job lost all his children on the same day (Job 1:18-19).

3. His own family abandoned him and his former friends attacked him.

4. His wife said to him, "Dost thou still hold fast thine integrity? Renounce God, and die (Job 2:9).

5. Job's friends came to comfort him, but instead of comforting him they accused him and caused him misery.

6. Although Job thought that God was trying him, it was actually Satan (Job 23:10). Job, in desperation, challenged as it were God with the idea of clearing his name and declaring his innocence. He learned that he could not answer God's questions.

7. Finally Job learned that God was not against him, and God made all things turn out for his good.

8. When God asked Job questions as recorded in Job 38, Job learned how great God is and just how little man really knows (Jer. 10:23).

9. Job is an outstanding example of what David wrote in Psalm 37:25, "I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Psa. 37:25).

Conclusion

After Job had questioned God,

Then Job answered Jehovah, and said, I know that thou canst do all things, And that no purpose of thine can be restrained. Who is this that hideth counsel without knowledge? Therefore have I uttered that which I understood not, Things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak; I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; But now mine eye seeth thee: Wherefore I abhor (myself), And repent in dust and ashes. And it was so, that, after Jehovah had spoken these words unto Job, Jehovah said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends; for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Now therefore, take unto you seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you; for him will I accept, that I deal not with you after your folly; for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. So Eliphaz the Temanite and

Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as Jehovah commanded them: and Jehovah accepted Job. And Jehovah turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: and Jehovah gave Job twice as much as he had before. Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him concerning all the evil that Jehovah had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one a ring of gold. So Jehovah blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: And he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she-asses. He had also seven sons and three daughters. And he called the name of the first, Jemimah: and the name of the second, Keziah; and the name of the third, Keren-happuch. And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren. And after this Job lived a hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, (even) four generations. So Job died, being old and full of days. (Job 42:1-17)

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CHAPTER 23

When Silence Becomes Sin

Adam Cozort

As one enters the confines of Job chapter 31, he finds that Job is nearing the end of his final defense before his three friends. He has been under attack for some time and has been defending and parrying the accusations of his accusers without wavering. Throughout this lengthy defense, which begins in chapter 26, he has consistently been upholding his righteousness before God and the unreasonable nature of the allegations posed by his companions.

Toward the conclusion of Job's remarks, he interjects the relevance of the continued defense of his innocence when he states,

If I covered my transgressions as Adam, by
hiding mine iniquity in my bosom: Did I fear a
great multitude, or did the contempt of families
terrify me, that I kept silence, and went not out
of the door? Oh that one would hear me! behold,
my desire is, that the Almighty would answer
me, and that mine adversary had written a book.
(King James Version, Job 31:33-35)

Job asks his friends to consider a point of interest in regard to his case. From the beginning of his struggles, he has not tried to hide from God as Adam did. When Adam sinned, he hid himself because of his shame and fear (Gen. 3:8-10). If Job had received these great judgments from God based upon sin he had committed, he argues it is not unlikely he would have responded much as the first patriarch; but such has not been the case. He has

continuously upheld the virtue of his life and called upon God to come to his defense.

In our judicial system, an individual is required to receive their Miranda rights when being accused of a crime. Among those rights is the right to remain silent so that you do not say anything that can later be used against you. For the individual guilty of a crime, this is certainly wise advice, and so it would have been for Job if he had been guilty, but he is not. Therefore, he is consistently refusing to remain silent when presented with these allegations.

Our responsibility in this chapter is to examine the question of when silence becomes sin. Mankind often considers silence to be a virtue, and knowing when to be silent certainly can be such. Job uses his lack of silence as a sign of innocence and righteous standing before God, and such it was to some degree. Some would argue that Job should not have said as much as he did and others that he should have said nothing at all, but such analyses are not the root of the question under consideration.

Are there times where silence is sinful? When are those occasions and how must the child of God deal with them when they arrive? These questions will be the focus of our study.

In order for us to ensure a unified understanding, it behooves us to take a moment to examine the dynamics of the question at hand. The question is not whether silence in a given situation is wise or unwise, thoughtful or thoughtless; instead, it is determining whether or not it is sinful.

Sin is the violation of the Law of God (1 John 3:4). It first requires that there be a standing command in place, for without a law covering the situation there can be no sin (Rom. 4:15). As a consequence, the only occasions where silence can be considered a sin are ones where remaining silent causes one to violate their responsibilities to the Covenant of Christ. From this vantage point, I believe there are three categories in which silence becomes sin. All three are solidly based in the commands of the Scriptures and evidenced within the confines of the account of Job.

Silence Becomes Sin When God Is Being Abused

It has not been uncommon over the centuries for man to try to use God and his precepts to their own ends, twisting and contorting the Scriptures until they do not portray even a shadow of their true intent. In such instances, God is being abused. The word *abused* is defined by Webster as, “To use ill; to maltreat; to misuse; to use with bad motives or to wrong purposes.” Therefore, the idea of abusing God is to mistreat or misuse Him or His Word.

A primary illustration of such an action and the necessity to speak in God’s defense is seen in our text from Job. Just a few verses following the statement of the patriarch in chapter 31, the 32nd chapter introduces a fifth man to the discussion.

Elihu is younger than any of the men currently engaged in the discourse and, as a consequence, has held his peace through the prior proceedings. However, with the discussion winding down, Elihu feels the need to speak. His reason for doing so is explained in this way:

So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram: against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God. Also against his three friends was his wrath kindled, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job. (Job 32:1-3)

Elihu was angry at both parties in the discussion for different reasons. He was upset at the three friends of Job for their continued condemnation of the patriarch without evidentiary cause other than their own suppositions; but he is also angry with Job because Job has been so worried about defending himself, he has forgotten his responsibility to defend God.

Job has called upon God to come to his defense but has not been willing to speak in defense of the righteousness and justice of God before these men. Elihu is angry that Job has allowed this to become all about him, not placing the emphasis where it should be: upon God and his righteousness. Elihu will spend the next six chapters speaking to the assembled men about the nature of God and his righteousness.

It is certainly interesting to note that upon the heels of Elihu's speech, God is going to deal directly with Job. He will validate before the suffering servant the speech of Elihu, reminding Job of who He is and the power He holds (Job 38-41).

Certainly it would have been wrong for Elihu to have been there, hearing all of the bombastic words of these other men in their arrogance toward God and one another and refuse to speak the words of truth before them. God deserved a public defender, and in this instance Elihu fit the bill.

Additionally, the New Testament is rife with admonitions and examples of the necessity to stand for the truth of God's Word before those who misuse it. One such example is found in Acts 15. The church had to deal with those who are arguing for the inclusion of Old Testament requirements in New Testament conversion. Christians who had come from a Pharisaical background were arguing for the necessity of circumcision and the keeping of the Law of Moses for Gentile converts (Acts 15:5).

After long periods of dispute, the apostle Peter and James the elder stood and presented the truth of the matter, offering a viable and acceptable solution to the issue (Acts 15:6-21). These two men could have sat back and watched the proceedings, deciding not to be involved in the issues before them; but God's Word was being misused by adding requirements to salvation that God did not ascribe to Christianity. For these men to have had the truth and the ability to present it, yet to refuse would have violated the Lord's command to teach others to observe the things commanded by Christ (Mat. 28:20) and thereby would have been a sin.

Without a doubt, the book of First Corinthians is one of the greatest examples of the necessity of standing for God when His Will is being abused. Whether it is the willingness of the Corinthians to call themselves disciples of men (1 Cor. 1); the willingness to allow sin to go unfettered within the congregation (1 Cor. 5); the mishandling of the instruments of worship (1 Cor. 11); or the abusive mentality toward spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12-14), Paul has to call out their errors and try to bring them back to righteousness through godly direction.

The apostle would later write that he did not enjoy having to relate those things to them, but that it was necessary to bring them to repentance (2 Cor. 7:8-12). How could Paul have fulfilled his responsibility to stand for God and the truth if he had remained silent in the face of their abuses?

The same principle holds true for the 21st century Christian. We must be willing to help those who are being tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:14); but this can only be accomplished by “speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15). If we refuse to speak in defense of God and His word, we cannot follow the example of the apostle when he wrote, “Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample” (Phi. 3:17), because he also stated: “I am set for the defense of the Gospel” (Phi. 1:17). Rest assured our silence becomes sin when we refuse to come to God’s defense.

Silence Becomes Sin When Souls Are At Stake

An interesting quandary is inserted into our study as one considers the overall environment of the book of Job. Job’s three friends are often berated and condemned by men for their interactions with the patriarch, but this writer is convinced we need to take a closer look at what transpires in this setting.

These friends of Job are not ignorant of his grief nor do they show disrespect for his losses. They sit with him for seven days and nights before the first word is uttered (Job 2:13), and it is only after Job speaks that they begin their admonitions.

Without doubt, these men have incomplete understandings of the workings of God and what is occurring with Job on this occasion. However, there is also no indication from the Scriptures that these men are in any way being dishonest or insincere. They completely believe the words they present to Job and there should be no inclination to believe anything but the fact that they are diligently trying to help a friend they see to be in deep spiritual trouble. Consider the words of Eliphaz when he first addresses Job:

Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands. Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees. But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled. Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways? Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? Or where were the righteous cut off? Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same. By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed. (Job 4:3-8)

Eliphaz recognizes the good that Job has done in his life, but he also has the fervent belief that disasters of this magnitude could only be the judgment of God, and that He would not stand against an individual that had not grievously sinned before Him. It is based upon this conviction, and the desire to see Job returned to his previous relationship with God, that the imploring arguments begin to be made for Job to admit his sin, repent, and turn back to God.

While recognition of the inaccurate assertions of these friends is acknowledged, another question should enter our minds: what else were these men supposed to do? They honestly believed that their friend's soul was in jeopardy, that he must have sinned

significantly against God for such a disaster to strike this observably righteous man. What sort of friends would they have been had they continued to remain silent, or worse yet, simply arisen from their seats to return home believing their friend to be lost without any inclination to help him?

These three friends recognized the responsibility they had toward Job based upon their understanding of the situation. Certainly, once no proof was present, no admission from Job brought forth, and no certification of condemnation by God revealed, the men should have reconsidered and desisted in their accusations. Nevertheless, these men understood the principle that when an individual's soul is at stake, silence is not an option.

Throughout the Scriptures, the responsibility of the people of God to reach out to those in sin and error is emphatically supported. Paul admonished the Galatians, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). Paul states the necessity of restoring the brother who has been overtaken by a trespass. This does not necessarily infer that the brother in question has intentionally disregarded God's Law but simply that something has been done that is a trespass and must be corrected.

The Scriptures also acknowledge:

Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way: but let it rather be healed. (Heb. 12:11-13)

No individual likes to be told he is wrong, and no Christian should relish the responsibility of pointing out the error of another; but if brothers and sisters in Christ are to fulfill their responsibilities

to God and each other, there must be the willingness to confront the individual whose soul is in jeopardy.

Though Jonah balked at this responsibility toward those he considered his enemies and unworthy of the Lord's admonitions, and the Corinthians showed a lack of concern for their brother when he was steeped in a life of sin (1 Cor. 5), the command of Scripture is very clear: we cannot remain silent when a person's soul is in jeopardy. James reminds his readers, "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (Jam. 5:19-20).

There has never been a soul that has learned the truth by silence (Rom. 10:14; Rom. 10: 17); if it is never spoken it can never be heard. Nor is it common for one to be brought back to Christ by means of disregarding silence from his brethren. When it comes to the saving of souls, we are not called to silence, but to action.

Silence Becomes Sin When Repentance Is Necessary

By the time the reader comes to chapter 42 of the book of Job, the patriarch has endured a six chapter reminder from Elihu of the righteousness of God, and a four chapter personal exhibition by God of His power, glory, and righteousness. Job responds to God by saying:

I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. (Job 42:2-6)

Job recognizes the mistakes that he has made. He is overcome with shame for the assumptions he made and the ignorance he showed. He tells God he despises himself for his actions and immediately repents before God. Job knows he has failed to stand for God as he should and that he made accusations against God that were wrong; but instead of being petulant, arrogant, or rebellious, he exhibits humility and godly sorrow.

Of equal interest is the action of God with regard to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. After Job repents, God speaks to these three men, commanding them to repent for their misrepresentations of God and to offer sacrifices (Job 42:7-9). They did not argue with God or refuse his verdict but did as they were commanded, showing their repentance.

It is deeply troubling to see members of the body of Christ sin, have it known to those around them, but because of pride, ego, and stubbornness refuse to repent. They would prefer to ignore the sin and pretend it never happened than to admit they were wrong and humble themselves before God and man.

Jesus states to those of his day, "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Mat. 5:23-24). He acknowledges the importance of repentance before sacrifice, making a similar argument to the one Samuel made before Saul in First Samuel 15:22. If the gift of the giver is to be acceptable, there can be no barrier between the giver and the recipient.

It is impossible for a Christian to have the relationship with God he desires when he tries to stand before God unrepentant. Isaiah reprimanded those unrepentant Israelites of his day when he wrote, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isa. 59:1-2). It is not that God does not want to hear His people, but when His people allow sin to come between

them and Him, He is left with no option until that sin is removed through repentance.

Therefore, if it is impossible for us to be acceptable to God with sin lacking repentance, and if our relationship with our brethren is damaged by their inability to remain in our fellowship while we retain that sin in our lives (1 Cor. 5:11), then to remain silent when we know repentance is required is to compound one sin upon another.

It is certainly true that repentance is not easy. It is far easier for most people to be silent and let the remembrance of sin fade with time. The problem with that philosophy is it does not work. God does not forget our sins with the passing of time, neither does man easily forget sins committed against him. Therefore, when one allows sin to fester in his or her life, and the impact of that sin to retain its poisoning of the relationships with both man and God, that person is doing nothing more than increasing personal harm and continuing soul-jeopardizing hardship.

Conclusion

The book of Job, with all of its speeches and diatribe, teaches a number of great lessons regarding silence. Silence can be of great value in many instances and can be a trait of great repute for the wise incorporator of it. Notwithstanding, silence can also carry very deadly consequences if it is misused. It cannot be present when one should stand for truth, convert the lost, or repent of sin.

A reminder of James' very pointed statement works as a succinct conclusion to our considerations. He writes, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (Jam. 4:17).

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CHAPTER 24

Why Men Suffer

Robert Jeffries

It was three years ago this November that I received a disturbing phone call just shortly before our evening worship. The voice on the other end of the line was my dad. He told me that my sister had just passed away. One of our elders, Vern Schrimsher, who was a deacon at the time, drove me to be with my parents. As we were traveling to the northeastern section of Memphis, I was still in shock from the crippling news, but I kept wondering why. Why had she passed away at only twenty-three years of age? This is a question that still crosses my mind today. We have all been there—when we have asked the question why. Consider the following questions that many have asked: (1) Why did my loved one pass away? (2) Why did the doctor come in and say, “I’m sorry there is no hope?” (3) Why did my loved one develop incurable cancer? (4) Why did that tsunami, earthquake, or tornado occur that killed so many people and left so many people homeless? (5) Why did my spouse become unfaithful and have an affair? (6) Why was my child born with a mental or physical disability? (7) Why did we have a miscarriage? (8) Why was my child stillborn? Why, why, why? Why do people suffer? If a person lives long enough, he or she will be exempt from it. Suffering comes in all shapes and sizes. It can affect people mentally, emotionally, and physically. Suffering has no age limits. It affects those who are young, middle-aged, and elderly. Our skin color does not matter; suffering comes to those of all races. Our social income does not matter; suffering visits those who are poor and wealthy. I have never met a single person who has not suffered. It is a universal human experience, but it still does not erase the thought, “why?”

Why do bad things happen and people suffer? Why is life filled with pain, suffering, and sorrow? In this study we want to address four questions: (1) Why Does Suffering Happen? (2) When Did Suffering Begin? (3) Why Does God Not Stop The Pain & Suffering? (4) What Are The Benefits From Suffering?

Why Does Suffering Happen?

The question of why is not a new question. In fact, this question has been around for ages. It can be traced back to the book of Judges in the days of Gideon. Imagine you are a farmer that works diligently all spring and summer so that you can reap the benefits and be able to provide for your family. Then, when it is time to pick your crops, your neighbor comes in and demands that you give up your crops to them against your will. This goes on year after year and there is nothing you can do about it. If one can imagine that situation, then he has an idea of the type of pain and suffering the children of Israel were experiencing at this time. The Bible states,

And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which *was* in Ophrah, that *pertained* unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide *it* from the Midianites. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD *is* with thee, thou mighty man of valour. And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where *be* all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee? (King James

Version, Jud. 6:11-14)

The Midianites, who were enemies of the children of Israel, were stealing their crops. Over time, the Israelites had become very crafty with their crops. They would hide them in caves so that they would not be taken. The Scriptures tell us that Gideon was secretly threshing the wheat by hand, so that the Midianites would not find him. When the angel of the Lord came to tell Gideon the Lord was with him, Gideon asked, “If the LORD be with us, why then all this befallen us?” Gideon was crying out, “Why is God allowing us to experience all of this pain and suffering?”

Gideon wondered if the Lord had forsaken them. Today, in the twenty-first century, people are asking the same question. “Some are like Gideon; they are faithful, prayerful, and obedient, but they are still suffering through many troubles and trials. They want to know why God has not helped or fixed their problems. Others, having no faith, wonder if there really is a God” (Lewis 580). So why is there suffering?

First, people suffer “because of the personal decisions that people make” (Jackson, *The Book* 116). We have all been there. We have made personal decisions that have caused pain and suffering in our lives, things that we have regretted doing. Earlier this year, the University of Arkansas football program was dealt a shocking blow when its Head Football Coach, Bobby Petrino, was caught in a scandal that uncovered the fact that he had an affair with one of his co-workers. The Athletic Director had no choice but to fire him. His terrible judgment led to the termination of his job. This writer can remember when the announcement came on November 7, 1991 that Magic Johnson had tested positive for the HIV-virus due to the unfaithfulness to his wife with multiple women throughout the course of his NBA career. One of this writer’s favorite singers is Keith Whitley. Unfortunately, Whitley’s life was cut short because of his serious drinking problem. In fact, according to the medical examiner’s report, on the day he died his blood alcohol level was .477 (the equivalent of 20 1-ounce shots of 100-proof whiskey) (“Whitley”). Not only can a person drink himself to

death, a person can smoke himself to death. How many people have suffered death because of lung cancer? A person can drug himself to death. How many people have suffered the terrible side effects of drugs?

In the Scriptures, there are numerous examples of individuals who suffered because of their own personal decisions. Consider the following: (1) Lot's wife, "But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt" (Gen. 19:26); (2) Nadab and Abihu, "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD" (Lev. 10:1-2); (3) Uzzah, "And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth *his hand* to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook *it*. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for *his error*; and there he died by the ark of God" (2 Sam. 6:6-7); (4) David (2 Samuel 11); (5) Judas Iscariot, "And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself" (Mat. 27:5); (6) The Prodigal Son (Luke 15); and (7) Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5).

Second, suffering happens "because of the personal decisions that other people make" (Jackson, *The Book* 116). September 11, 2001, will forever be a day that is etched in the minds of millions of people around the world. Nearly three thousand innocent people died because of the foolish actions of terrorists. Through the years, there are countless families that have lost loved ones because someone decided to get behind the wheel of a car and drive while intoxicated. How many innocent children have suffered because their mothers or fathers were addicted to crack or alcohol?

In the Word of God, there are numerous occurrences of this. Consider the following: the first time that we read about a person suffering because of the foolish choices of others is found in Genesis 4. Here we read about the first murder. Abel suffered the loss of his life and Adam and Eve lost their son, all because of the poor choices

of Cain. Joseph serves as a great example of this. Due to jealousy, Joseph's brothers beat him and stripped him of his coat of many colors that had been given to him by his father. To add insult to injury, they decided to sell their brother as a slave in order to make a profit off him. Joseph would end up having a man by the name of Potiphar as his master. Then, he would face another round of suffering at the hands of Potiphar's wife.

And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me. But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what *is* with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; *There is* none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou *art* his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, *or* to be with her. And it came to pass about this time, that *Joseph* went into the house to do his business; and *there was* none of the men of the house there within. And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out. And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth, That she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice: And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out. And she laid up his garment

by her, until his lord came home. And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me: And it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled out. And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled. And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners *were* bound: and he was there in the prison. (Gen. 39:7-20)

Shortly thereafter, the children of Israel would move to Egypt because of the famine in the land and they would suffer for four hundred thirty years at the hands of the Egyptians (Gal. 3:17).

Third, suffering occurs "because of the choices of previous generations" (Jackson, *The Book* 116). On one hand, we are able to benefit from generations gone by. This writer is extremely thankful for the advancements in modern technology such as air conditioning, washing machines, dryers, cell phones, internet, etc. Often when this writer prays for sick members at local hospitals, he thanks our Heavenly Father for the advancements that have been made in medicine and thanks Him for the continual discoveries that are being made, as well as the training of our physicians in the twenty-first century. However, sometimes people bear the consequences of former generations. Long ago, God warned His people that He was a jealous God, and if they rejected Him, it would affect their unborn children in generations to come. "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments" (Exo. 20:5-6). Have you ever watched commercials on television that

show young children that are starving to death in foreign countries? In some of those places, it is because their ancestors started to believe in the false doctrine of re-incarnation and believe that a loved one has come back as a cow. Therefore, the people of those countries will not eat the meat that could provide them with much needed nourishment for their bodies.

Fourth, suffering happens “because of natural law” (Harrub). In Brad Harrub’s DVD “Why Is There Evil, Pain, and Suffering?” he suggests two examples in regards to the Law of Nature: 1) “‘Momentum.’ Momentum is the power residing in a moving object. If a person were to walk outside the Southaven building and then step in front of a bus moving at 45 miles per hour, chances are, that individual is going to suffer the consequences of natural law. 2) ‘Gravity.’ Gravity is what keeps everything in line on our planet and from things just floating in space. If a person falls from a tall building or simply falls off a ladder, they will suffer the consequences, of natural law as well.” Jesus would use gravity as an opportunity to teach during His ministry. “Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:4-5). Just as those men perished because of the laws of gravity, you will perish too if you do not repent.

Fifth, “sometimes we just do not know” (Harrub) why people suffer. This one seems to be the hardest for people to understand, and the one that makes them question things the most. Why do some people develop Muscular Sclerosis or Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (Lou Gehrig’s Disease)? Why do some people who have never smoke or drink develop lung or liver cancer?

Sixth, sometimes we suffer because we are Christians. Throughout the New Testament there are numerous Scriptures that talk about the fact that Christians will suffer in some way or another. The Apostle Peter wrote, “Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf” (1 Pet. 4:16). Paul would also write to Timothy, “Yea, and all that will live godly in

Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). The Apostle Paul was one who could definitely speak from experience.

Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool)
I *am* more; in labours more abundant, in stripes
above measure, in prisons more frequent, in
deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty
stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods,
once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck,
a night and a day I have been in the deep; *In*
journeyings often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils
of robbers, *in* perils by *mine own* countrymen,
in perils by the heathen, *in* perils in the city, *in*
perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in*
perils among false brethren; In weariness and
painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and
thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.
Beside those things that are without, that
which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the
churches. (2 Cor. 11:23-28)

As Jesus wrote to the church at Smyrna, He reminded them of the necessity of being faithful until death. However, in the process He reminded them that they may face persecution. “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). Historians have suggested that Polycarp, who was a member of the church at Smyrna, was told to renounce his commitment to Christ and burn incense to the Emperor. His reply was, “Eighty and six years I have served him. How then can I blaspheme my King and Saviour? Bring forth what thou wilt” (“Polycarp”). Because of his decision, Polycarp was burned at the stake. Unfortunately, we may suffer for being a Christian. We may suffer emotional pain and physical pain. But let us be sure to remember that the blessings of being a Christian are out of this world. Even though he is not a

New Testament Christian, the man that this lectureship volume is about—Job—is a man that suffered immensely for being faithful to God and doing what was right. He lost his children and livestock (Job 1). Then, he developed terrible sores from his head to toes (Job 2:7). In spite of all of this, Job never turned his back on God, nor did he turn his back on God or lose his faith. In fact, James tells us that he is a model of what endurance and perseverance is all about. “Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy” (Jam. 5:11).

W.T. Hamilton suggests that there are numerous other reasons why people suffer. He listed the following reasons: “natural disasters (storms, earthquakes, floods, tornadoes, tsunamis, hurricanes, etc.), law and order (i.e., industry has been a blessing to the production of various products, but industrial accidents claim thousands of lives each year. Automobiles are a wonderful means of transportation, but thousands of people are killed annually because of the misuse of this heavy piece of machinery), ignorance (how many people have said if I would have only known this or that, I would not be in the pain I am in right now?), and carelessness (how many people could have avoided suffering if they had only been a little more careful?)” (66-68).

When Did Suffering Begin?

It all began in the Garden of Eden with one three letter word—“NOT!” “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die...And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die” (Gen. 2:17; Gen. 3:4). Once they sinned, everything changed. The Apostle Paul tells us, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom. 5:12). It was here that the ultimate consequence of death would be given to mankind. We do not inherit sin from Adam, but physical death would result from that sin for all mankind. Is it any wonder why Paul said, “O death, where *is* thy

sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory? The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law. But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord” (1 Cor. 15:55-57). Death brings about pain and suffering.

Why Does God Not Stop The Pain And Suffering?

First, God does not stop pain and suffering because He gave us the freedom to make a decision or a choice. Throughout God’s Word there is plenty of evidence concerning our free will. Consider the following passages:

I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live. (Deu. 30:19)

As his life was coming to a close, Joshua challenged the children of Israel to make a decision. “And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Jos. 24:15).

Later on, Elijah would tell the people that they needed to make a choice too. “And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD *be* God, follow him: but if Baal, *then* follow him. And the people answered him not a word” (1 Kin. 18:21).

In the Garden of Eden, God gave Adam and Eve instructions of what to do or not to do. However, they could choose what to do and what not to do, just like with the children of Israel.

Second, God is not a respecter of persons. If God chose to help one and alleviate his suffering, He would have to do it with everyone. “For there is no respect of persons with God” (Rom. 2:11). Someone might ask, why does God not help the good people and let the bad people suffer? Jesus said, “That ye may be the children of your Father

which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Mat. 5:45). Once again, God does not stop suffering because He is not a respecter of persons.

What Are The Benefits Of Suffering?

Some have asked that question this way. Why does God allow suffering to happen? One of the major arguments that an atheist will use to try to refute Christianity and the existence of God is through the avenue of human suffering. The Greek philosopher, Epicurus, who lived around 300 BC, said, ‘If God wanted to prevent evil, but cannot, then He is not all-powerful—if He can prevent evil, but will not, then He is not good. If He has both the power and the will to eliminate evil, then why is evil in the world?’ The fallacy of the argument is that nothing good can come from suffering (Jackson, *The Book*).

“It has been said that there is no greater education than matriculating through the ‘University of Hard Knocks.’ One thing is certain: many who have passed through the crucible of suffering will acknowledge that they have found themselves infinitely better for the experience—bitter though it may have been” (Jackson, “The Value”). In essence not all human suffering and pain is bad. For instance, sometimes a person may feel tightening in his chest. This is the body’s way of telling a person that something may be wrong. He goes to the doctor who is able to prevent the individual from having a massive heart attack. Feeling pain associated with a burn lets a person know that he needs to protect himself from heat, like with a hot frying pan so he does not burn himself. Suffering can get our attention and can be for our benefit. It was the Apostle Paul that wrote the following to the Romans, “And not only so, but

we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience” (Rom. 5:3).

It helps us keep things in proper perspective. “Suffering helps us in seeing the real worth of things. When one passes through the experience of intense suffering, and perhaps comes to the threshold of death, the entire world can take on new meaning. Christopher Reeve, who starred as Superman in the movies, was paralyzed in an accident, and discovered that in real life he was not as invincible as the character he portrayed. In interviews following his personal tragedy, Mr. Reeve commented that since being paralyzed, he had discovered a new zest for life” (Jackson, “The Value”). So many people seem to get too attached to a world that we are not going to live in forever. In fact, we are really only here for a brief moment. “Man *that is* born of a woman *is* of few days, and full of trouble. . . . Whereas ye know not what *shall be* on the morrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (Job 14:1; Jam. 4:14). The Apostle Peter reminds us of this, “Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Pet. 2:11). Suffering helps us to understand there is a better world to come and to long for the place called Heaven. A world where there will be no more pain, suffering, discouragement, sickness, tragedy, heartache, or death.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor

crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. (Rev. 21:1-5)

John would continue to write about Heaven by letting us know that there will not be any sin there. “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Rev. 21:8). Wow! What a place!

As we conclude this question, let us notice a statement made by Brad Bromling in reference to pain and suffering: “We may affirm that although evil, pain, and suffering exist, it is not evil that they do. He gives the following benefits of evil, pain, and suffering: 1) Pain helps us to know when something is wrong in our life. 2) Suffering contributes to the spiritual growth of a person. 3) Pain and suffering cannot rob a Christian of his eternal hope in Heaven” (598).

Conclusion

Suffering comes in all shapes and sizes. It affects everyone regardless of age, gender, or income status. When it comes, let us be sure that we think about why it may be happening and not forget about the bigger picture.

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CHAPTER 25

A Covenant Every Man Ought To Have With His Eyes

Allen Webster

Job was persecuted by his adversary, tested by his God, and misunderstood by his friends. His friends felt that he had committed some terrible sin, for God to punish him with so many trials. In a series of speeches, Job denied sinning and defended his reputation against their attacks. In Job 29, he reviewed his good deeds (King James Version). He argued strongly that he was innocent of both outward and inward sins. In Job 3, he listed sins he had not committed—in his heart (Job 31:1-12), against his neighbors (Job 31:13-23), or against God (Job 31:24-34).

In the “sins of the heart” section, Job makes a remarkable statement every man should consider making his own: “I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?” (Job 31:1). This is one of the greatest statements of purity found anywhere in Scripture.

Let us analyze it:

“I”—Personal Integrity Was Important To Job

The essence of religion is not what others can observe in a worship service or count in a contribution plate. True religion involves self-discipline in keeping oneself unspotted from the world (Jam. 1:27). Who we are in the dark and when no one is around will tell more about our religion than who we are on street corners

(Mat. 6:5) and at fellowship meals. Religion's true test is the closet (Mat. 6:6). Faith's power is best seen in quiet, lonely places or when one is only an anonymous face in a crowd of strangers.

The preacher will not know if I glance at a girl as she walks by in tight jeans. My wife will probably never know if I stare at the bikini girl in the Sports Center beer commercial. If I am careful my children will not see me flip through the Victoria Secret's catalog that came in yesterday's mail. The congregation on Sunday will not know if I ogled the cheerleaders at halftime on Saturday. My friends will not know if I clicked the tantalizing link that popped up on my computer or watched a replay of women's beach volleyball after everyone fell asleep one night.¹

Only two beings know all these things: God and me. That brings us to a key word in every man's life: integrity. Integrity refers to moral wholeness. Duplicity is the contrasting characteristic. Integrity is used of one who is without moral blemish.

Job had it. The word often translated *integrity* in Scripture is translated *upright* in Job 1:1 and Proverbs 11:20. Job's integrity impressed God. He said to Satan: "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause" (Job 2:3).

Job maintained his integrity under fire. He said, "Till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live" (Job 27:5-6). He maintained integrity in spite of circumstances that made it seem useless, friends who suspected it was a sham, and a wife who urged him to forsake it (Job 2:9).

Job did not merely refrain from looking; he removed it from his list of options. A sense of honor or fear of shame might restrain a man from pursuing a tryst with a beautiful woman, but only integrity restrains him from even thinking of it. Job made it a governing principle of his life not to lust. It was not merely his intention to keep a good reputation and to avoid scandal; his goal was to maintain a

pure heart. Job does not merely say that he had not done it since his trials came upon him or since he was older or since he married. He said it was a rule he had lived by all the time. Any temptation of that kind caused him to recoil with indignation. His purposes of leading a pure life and keeping a pure heart were so strong that he would not budge from it.

Job refrained from looking because he knew that God looked at him (cf. Job 7:19-20; Job 10:14; Job 13:27; Job 14:16). He desired the approval and blessing of God. Just after his question in Job 31:1, he asked, "What portion of God is there from above?" (Job 31:2). That is, what blessing can impure sinners expect from a holy God? Job knew that the heritage God gives sinners is ruin (cf. Job 18:21; Job 20:29; Job 27:7; Job 27:13; Job 29:17). We, too, know that no unclean thing shall enter into the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:27).

God's great servants always value integrity above pleasure. David said, "Judge me, O Lord; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the Lord; therefore I shall not slide . . . as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me" (Psa. 26:1-11). Solomon included integrity as a characteristic of wisdom: "Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool" (Pro. 19:1). He promised: "The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them" (Pro. 11:3).

Integrity is at the core of Christianity. When we enlisted in the Lord's army, part of our duties called for us to "deny self" (Mat. 16:24). We agreed to crucify ourselves and let Jesus call the shots from inside our heads (Gal. 2:20). Since Jesus is living in our bodies, He has control of where our eyes look. Our goal in each passing encounter with the opposite sex is to please God and not ourselves (2 Tim. 2:4).

In our technologically advanced, sex-oriented culture, it is easy to make excuses and compromise our standards. God's standard for sexual purity does not change with the times or environment. He says there must not be even a hint of sexual impurity among His people. Paul wrote, "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or

covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints” (Eph. 5:3).

Contrary to popular thought, this is possible. God sets the bar high because He has a high opinion of His young (and even not-so-young) soldiers. His apostle wrote: “I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one . . . For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2:14-17).

The peace of mind and self-respect a clean heart brings is healthy emotionally and physically (cf. John 8:9). We should strive to always have a “conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men” (Acts 24:16). A pure heart improves a man’s relationship with his wife. A man giving away his sexual attention little by little throughout the day to every woman who happens across his path distances himself emotionally from his wife. Many marriages keep a low-grade fever all the time because the husband constantly exposes himself to the germ of lust. His feelings for his wife are not as intense as they should be, and his physical relationship with her is not as pleasing as it could be for either of them. God wants husbands to find full satisfaction only in their wives (Pro. 5:18), and vice versa (1 Cor. 7:1-4). In this age when so many marriages fail and others hang on by a thread, every point of connection and fortification is vastly important.

“Covenant”—Job Made A Formal Plan For Purity

A covenant is a formal, binding agreement between two parties. We reserve covenants for the most important milestones in life. We make a covenant when we get married, adopt a child, or execute a will. We may sign a covenant to live within a community, accept a position of trust, join the military, or join a prestigious club.

Job felt that living a pure life called for this solemn—some would say drastic—step. The phrase *made a covenant* is literally *cut the covenant sacrifice with my eyes*. In those days, a covenant

was ratified by sacrificing an animal. The idea was, “If I break this covenant may this type death happen to me.” Job’s resolve was as strong as if he had made a solemn pact before a judge in a court of law. The two contracting parties were his conscience and his eyes; God was the Judge in whose court it was filed (Clarke). A lustful look to Job would have been a dual sin: impurity and covenant-breaking.

We should take the sin of lust as seriously as Job did. Jesus said, in hyperbole, if your eye causes you to sin, perhaps by looking lustfully, tear it out. If your hand causes you to stumble, perhaps by reaching to touch her, cut it off (Mat. 5:27-30). Although Democritus put out his eyes because he could not look upon a woman without lusting after her, these are not literal commands (Tertullian). They are exaggerations to show how serious sin is in God’s eyes.

We should follow Job’s lead and determine that our eyes will be used only for good. Paul wrote that we are not to yield the members of our bodies as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin (Rom. 6:13), and that we are not to be brought under any dominion of sin (Rom. 6:16). As members of our bodies, our eyes must be used only as instruments of righteousness; they must not become “eyes full of adultery” that “cannot cease from sin” (2 Pet. 2:14). Like the vessels of the temple, may they be dedicated only to the service of God, and never for profane purposes. Like our tongues that cannot bring forth sweet water and bitter, our eyes cannot be used one moment to read our Bibles and the next to covet our neighbor’s wife (Col. 3:5).

Making an agreement with our eyes will serve useful purposes:
An Eye Covenant Sets A Goal

Most men are competitive and goal-oriented. Give us an assignment to tackle, a to-do list to check off, a game to win, and we will throw ourselves into it. Making a written covenant with our eyes sets a goal, gives us a mantra to repeat in times of temptation, and provides focus when emotions or hormones cloud the picture. Coupled with prayer and providence, a covenant is a powerful tool for righteousness. Solomon said, “A man’s heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps” (Pro. 16:9).

A goal differs from a dream. Dr. William Mitchell said, “A dream is a picture of the world the way we want it to be or as it should be. A goal is a picture of the world the way we are willing to work to make it become.” Like David we say, “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord” (Psa. 27:4). Only the pure in heart will see God (Mat. 5:8).

An Eye Covenant Aligns Priorities And Fortifies Resolve

It is a way of saying, “My purity is worth more to me than my pleasure.” If we do not establish a goal for purity, the devil will set us up for impurity. Ask David. Ask Samson. Ask Solomon. Ask Herod. Ask Jacob. If we have no goal for righteousness, the first pretty young thing that sets her sights on us will be our downfall. A double-minded man is unstable (Jam. 1:8); a single-minded man is a force (Mat. 6:22; Phi. 3:13). An immature man is “tossed to and fro, and carried about by...craftiness” (Eph. 4:14); a mature man is an unmoved rock that the storms beat day after day to no avail (Mat. 7:25).

Our resolve must remain strong, or temptation will wear us down. Someone observed that snakes shed their skins year-round, but sinners shed their clothes in the summer. Worldly girls enjoy looking “hot,” so when the temperature goes up, the clothes come down. Men see a constant parade of shorts, low tops, bare midriffs, tight tanks, and form-fitting stretch pants. They are shown every curve of female anatomy by clothes as tight as Saran Wrap. Swimsuit ads, magazine covers, and what female pool/beachgoers wear cover little and leave nothing to the imagination.

This study is from a man’s perspective, but we might mention that women can make it easier on men by adorning themselves as “women professing godliness” (1 Tim. 2:9-10; Mat. 5:27-28; Rom. 12:1-2). Desiring to look “hot” is lasciviousness, a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:19). As a rule of thumb, in the Old Testament (which was written for our learning, Rom. 15:4), the uncovering of the buttocks and thighs (as swimwear and short shorts do) was considered nakedness (Exo. 20:26; Exo. 28:40-42; Isa. 47:2-3; Isa. 20:4).

An Eye Covenant Moves Us From Remorse To Change

Many Christian men carry around a lot of guilt because they know they are not living up to the standards of the gospel. With varying success, some have fought the habit of lust for years—even decades. In not a few cases, their eyes have been straying since their early teen years. They are hurting and confused. They know Jesus said, “Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46) and wonder, “Why can’t I beat this?” A covenant can help men—finally—to get past the guilt and become the man they want to be. Each can escape “the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Pet. 1:4) by self-discipline of his eyes and thoughts.

To bring our bodies under subjection (1 Cor. 9:27), we must understand the powerful sexual drive God gave us. God made us with desires which have legitimate purposes. Man’s sex drive, among other things, leads to the procreation of children and emotional connection with his wife. God has provided a holy and legitimate outlet for these desires. It is called marriage (1 Cor. 7:2). It is better to marry than to burn in lust (1 Cor. 7:9). The human male, because of sperm production and other factors, naturally desires sexual release about every forty-eight to seventy-two hours. A husband and wife are to willingly and constantly satisfy each other’s need for sex (1 Cor. 7:3). They are not to separate except by mutual consent for an agreed upon time, lest they be tempted to find satisfaction illegitimately (1 Cor. 7:5).

In those times and circumstances when legitimate fulfillment is unavailable (before marriage, wife injured or sick, business travel, military service, divorce, widowed), God provides man with sufficient willpower and intellect to control one’s desires. He expects His children to set an example for non-believers by avoiding youthful lusts before marriage (2 Tim. 2:22) and abstaining from the lusts of the flesh throughout marriage (1 Pet. 2:11-12). These admonitions are given to us because lust produces corruption and evil in the world (2 Pet. 1:4), as well as sin and death (Jam. 1:14-15).

Lust is an illegitimate means of fulfilling the sex drive. It is an addictive behavior and has things in common with smoking,

overeating, and even alcoholism and drug addiction. Addictive behaviors are based on pleasure highs. In this case, men receive a chemical high from sexually charged images—epinephrine is secreted into the bloodstream, which locks into the memory whatever stimulus is present at the time of the emotional excitement. Lusting gives a man a little chemical pop—like knocking back an energy drink.

Sexual temptation is also progressive. Dr. Victor Cline, clinical psychologist at the University of Utah, works with clients involved in pornography. He says there is a four-stage syndrome common to almost all sex addicts:

- The addiction phase: The viewer sees powerful imagery that can be recalled later. The “aphrodisiac effect” slowly begins to rule their lives. Eventually, they view pornography even at the risk of negative consequences.
- The escalation phase: More and more stimulation is needed to reach the “high.” For those addicted to pornography, this means more graphic material is sought.
- The desensitization phase: Material once thought unthinkable, shocking, illegal, repulsive, and immoral becomes acceptable. For instance, the fastest growing sector of this dark industry is child pornography. Pornography wears away at accepted norms and eats away at one’s sensitivity until nothing is “out of bounds.”
- The act-out phase: Viewing is no longer enough to reach the high. A heart blighted and blackened by sin longs to move from passivity to activity. The command against letting sin reign in our mortal body to obey the lust thereof (Rom. 6:12) refers to those evil desires which are ready to express themselves in bodily activity. (as qtd. in Pollard)

Lust is the “athlete’s foot of the mind” which never really goes away. It is always asking to be scratched, promising relief with the next cheap thrill. Internet pornography has been called “the new

crack cocaine.” Once an image is created in the mind, that picture becomes an idol. The habit of masturbation becomes an act of worshiping that idol (Arterburn and Stoeker).

According to *Everyman’s Battle, Winning the War on Sexual Temptation One Victory at a Time*, men’s sexual temptations fall into a bell curve. Around 10 percent of men seem to have no sexual temptation problem with their eyes and their minds. At the other end of the curve, 10 percent of men are sexual addicts and have a serious problem with lust. The rest of men comprise the middle 80 percent, living in various shades of gray when it comes to sexual sin.

Women, especially Christian women, are often surprised that the number could be anywhere near that high. They would have guessed that the first and third categories were reversed—ten percent of men have trouble in this area and eighty percent do not. They have no idea how intense these temptations may be for the man in their life, and he is never likely to tell her. Many women are surprised at the risk men take to satisfy their desires.

The temptation of women quickly to label men as uncontrolled perverts who do not think about anything but sex fails both the common sense test and the Golden Rule test (Mat. 7:12). That men have strong sex drives is not a recent discovery, of course. Respected American historian and philosopher Will Durant⁴ (1885-1981) wrote in the April, 1969, *Reader’s Digest* on this subject:

Sex, after hunger, is our strongest instinct and greatest problem...Our ancestors played this sexual impulse down, knowing that it was strong enough without encouragement; we have blown it up with a thousand forms of incitation, advertisement, emphasis and display, and have armed it with the doctrine that inhibition is dangerous. Whereas inhibition—the control of impulse—is the first principle of civilization.

If from Durant's perspective this was true a half century ago, a period extremely tame by today's standards, what would he say today?

For women to be so naïve as to think this is a problem some other man in some other place at some other time has is foolish. If you think your husband or son could never fall into sexual sin, then ask yourself, "Is he godlier than David, stronger than Samson, and wiser than Solomon?" Truly, "many strong men have been slain by her" (Pro. 7:26), including both bad men (Gen. 6:2; Mat. 14:6-9) and good men (Gen. 34:2; 2 Sam. 11:2-4).

A healthy approach is to recognize the challenge that our culture presents to male purity but to steadfastly believe that it can—yea, must—be achieved. Women can help men, to be sure, but ultimately men must make the decision to be pure. Then with the help of Christ (Phi. 4:13), they will be victorious. Paul's passing phrase, "such were some of you" (1 Cor. 6:11), gives great encouragement that gospel power is greater than sensual power (Rom. 1:16). John's statement is also heartening: "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

An Eye Covenant Gives A Tool For Character Building

An eye covenant shows that we are serious about our relationship with God. It teaches us discipline through delayed gratification. Most sins of passion are the result of allowing the imagination to dwell on impure images. As the eye is the great source of danger (cf. Mat. 5:28; 2 Pet. 2:14), no man is too cautious in this area. Sin never makes sense in the long run, but if our focus is shortsighted, we are prone to look at the immediate benefit and not consider the long-term implications.

We should write down our purity goal in our own words and write beside it why it is important. We ask ourselves, "What do I want to become as a person, and why?" Certainly, four will make all of our lists:

- A husband worth respecting;
- A father worth imitating;

- A Christian worth knowing;
- A leader worth following.

It is time to “man up” (cf. 1 Cor. 6:13). While Hollywood culture mutes masculinity and promotes strong female leads in many productions, the real world needs real men to step up and be real leaders. For this to happen, each of us must become the person that God intended for us to be. God’s definition of real manhood is pretty simple: Hear the Word and do it (Jam. 1:22).

Jesus is the perfect example of manhood. He always did those things that pleased His Father (John 8:29). As relates to our study, His eyes never looked upon a woman with lust. His mind never mused upon an unholy thought. His hands never touched a woman with dishonor. His mouth never spoke lewdly of a woman as a sex object. “Go, and do thou likewise” (Luke 10:37; cf. 1 Pet. 2:20-21).

Although American society makes excuses for men remaining boys for a lifetime, it is time for us as husbands and fathers to accept the responsibility to be the spiritual examples our wives and children need (1 Cor. 11:1). While many men in the workplace sexually harass and disrespect their female coworkers, may each of us be a coworker who treats women in the workplace fairly, and the younger women “as sisters, with all purity” (1 Tim. 5:2). Even though our classmates may see girls as three dimensional swimsuit pages, we can be gentlemen who treat girls as beautiful, holy creatures made in God’s image (Gen. 1:26).

It is time to answer Jeremiah’s question: “Wilt thou not be made clean? When?” (Jer. 13:27) with Hosea’s response: “It is time” (Hos. 10:12). Yea, as Paul said, “It is high time” (Rom. 13:11).

“Eyes”—Job Stopped Sin At The Gate

Job determined not to employ his eyes in looking on objects that might ensnare his heart and lead him to commit sin. To get into a man’s head, Satan must go through one of the portals of his five senses. The five senses are not equal sexual pathways to the mind, however. By comparison, the eyes are an interstate freeway

of opportunity; the ears are a state highway; touch is a city street; smell and taste are small back roads. When it comes to lust, more goes through the eye than through the ear, nose, tongue, and hands combined. As any dirty fighter learns, Satan knows that “going for the eyes” is often a successful tactic.

All who would keep their hearts pure must post a guard at their eyes. “What we must not meddle with we must not lust after; and what we must not lust after we must not look at” (Henry). This would include forbidden wealth (Pro. 23:5), forbidden wine (Pro. 23:31), and forbidden women (Pro. 23:33). The first sin began with the eye (Gen. 3:6). The eyes are inlets to many sins and particularly to lust (1 John 2:16). Thus we read of “wanton” eyes (Isa. 3:16) and “eyes full of adultery” (2 Pet. 2:14).

God specifically forbids men to lust after female beauty with their eyes and in their hearts (Pro. 6:25). The word Solomon used for *lust*⁵ literally means to see a woman as a “delectable thing.” It aptly expresses the physical appetite of a sensual desire. A lustful man sees her as a food to be devoured; a thing to be used to gratify an appetite. It is disgustingly illustrated in Amnon’s behavior toward his half-sister Tamar (2 Sam. 13:1-14).

Lusts are described in the New Testament as “foolish and hurtful,” (1 Tim. 6:9); “youthful” (2 Tim. 2:22); “diverse” (divers) (Tit. 3:3); “worldly” (Tit. 2:12); and “fleshly” (1 Pet. 2:11). There are lusts “of the eyes,” “of the world” (1 John 2:16), and of the “ungodly” (Jude 1:18).

Men’s eyes give them the means to sin broadly and, with today’s female fashions and technology, at will. To sin sexually, a man does not need a date or a mistress. He does not have to be good-looking, rich, or have a pleasing personality. He does not ever need to wait. This study is not about pornography; it nevertheless is true that technology (computer, iPad, smartphone, or cable TV) literally puts the opportunity to lust in front of most men 24/7.

More to the point, the living female form is practically always before men—at work (94 percent of men work in close proximity to women, and immodest dress is often the norm); around town (he

cannot go to Walmart, a restaurant, or the city park without getting an eyeful), family time (anything from children's ball games, to fishing, to Disney World will put one in proximity of women with abbreviated or form-fitting clothes), and even at church services (short skirts and low tops are never more inappropriate than when in the presence of God and brothers) (cf. Isa. 1:12; 1 Pet. 1:16).

Women have trouble understanding the visual connection to sex that men have because they do not usually experience the same degree of stimulation by seeing a man's body. Sure there may be an attraction, but their sexual ignitions are tied more to touch and relationship. Another difference is that men are more like a shotgun with scattered shot, in that they can be attracted to many different women, even total strangers, at the same time; women are more like a one-shot rifle, in that they are more likely to have their sights set on a certain guy. Thus a girl may dress provocatively for a ball game hoping to catch the attention of the boy that she has a crush on, not thinking about how practically all the non-Christian boys will look lewdly in her direction. She wants *him* to notice; they *all* notice.

Profane men are not picky. They can be turned on by a nude photograph of a total stranger whose face they cannot even see just as easily as in a romantic weekend getaway with their wife. Women view this visual aspect of men's sexuality as shallow and dirty, often detestable and debased. What men see as normal, instinctive behavior, women are likely to label perverted and distasteful. Scripture shows that good men are not without temptation, and that men and women are "wired" differently. This is not to excuse sinful behavior, but to get at the way temptation works, so that both men and women can help each other avoid it (cf. Mat. 18:1-6) (Arterburn and Stoeker).

Men, we may not always be able to control our circumstances (such as how women dress around us or how the hormones in our bodies make us feel), but we can control where we look. And we can control what we think about. In fact, we are commanded to do just that. Paul wrote, "Whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phi. 4:8). As free

moral agents we can think, see, and do what we choose (cf. Jos. 24:15) and will be judged for it (2 Cor. 5:10).

Thinking is the key. All action is the result of the way we think, for as a man thinks in his heart so he is (Pro. 23:7). Thinking and looking are a two-way street, of course. What we think will determine where we look, and where we look will determine what we think. That is, what we think about is primarily determined by what we see. So by practicing diligence in looking, our passions can be controlled and evil desire subdued (Col. 3:5).

“Think”—Job Understood The Power Of Imagination

Man’s imagination is a pleasant and wondrous gift from God. Like most gifts, though, it can be misused and abused. In Noah’s day, every imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart was only evil continually (Gen. 6:5). The prolonged thought of sin is sin.

In our text (Job 31:1), Job vowed not to use his imagination to undress a girl with his eyes. There is no sin in appreciating a girl’s beauty (cf. Gen. 24:16), but it becomes lust when one begins to think sexual thoughts about her or imagine what a sexual encounter with her would be like.

In the war against lust, there are three perimeters of defense we can build into our lives:

We Must Put Up A Perimeter Around Our Eyes.

So far was Job from any act of lasciviousness, that he would not so much as allow a desirous look. He made preparations not to wantonly gaze at her beauty, lest his heart should be drawn to lust after her. He took the precaution to guard against it by turning his eyes from beholding what might be alluring to him.

As with Job, the first perimeter in fighting Satan, our outermost defense, is fought at the eye level. Our eyes form a wall with “Keep Out” signs posted. Since it is easy to sin with our eyes, we must carefully shun evil every time it appears (1 The. 5:22), stay away from whatever puts before our eyes lustful images (Mat. 6:23), and take every necessary possible precaution not to allow sin to get a foothold through our eye sockets (Eph. 4:27).

One successful strategy is to train the eyes to bounce away from pretty women and sensual images. One man prayed, “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way” (Psa. 119:37). This literally means, “Make my eyes to pass, not noticing evil” (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown). Albert Barnes comments here that each should look away from “vain things; wicked things; things which would be likely to lead me astray from what is real and true.” When a shapely woman walks by in tight jeans, jogging shorts, or a short skirt, deliberately look in another direction until she is beyond view. Solomon’s advice fits well here: “Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee” (Pro. 4:25).

In many cases, the problem is that men have trained their eyes to bounce toward the sexual. They have formed a bad habit of turning toward temptation. To combat this improper response, a new reflex action must be intentionally cultivated to bounce away, like the jerk of the hand away from a hot stove. A further challenge is that this sin has an addictive quality, and our bodies will not want to give up its pleasures. Experts say that anything done consistently for twenty-one days becomes a new habit. Do not be discouraged if it takes longer, though. If one has been in a bad habit for several years, it is not likely to completely go away in a month. Another said that it takes thirty to sixty days to create new thought patterns. Success will not come overnight, but it will come. With a strong desire, and the Spirit’s help (Eph. 3:16; Eph. 6:17), it can certainly be accomplished.

We Must Put Up A Perimeter Around Our Minds.

A second line is needed for those times when a look occurs or an image gets through our eyes. It might be a commercial that pops up during a ball game, a sudden lascivious memory from pre-Christian days, or a slip-up when a blouse opens as a coworker bends to pick up a folder from your desk. At this perimeter, we simply evaluate and capture any evil thoughts, reject them, pray for strength, and move on. It is not a sin to have a lustful thought; it is a temptation. “Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed” (Jam. 1:14).

It is a sin, however, to dwell upon an evil thought, to relish it, to hold on to it. One preacher said, aptly, “We cannot keep a bird from flying over our heads, but we can keep it from building a nest in our hair.” *Pulpit Commentary* says of Proverbs 6:25: “The admonition is a warning to repress the very first inclination to unchaste desires.” Temptation seldom breaks down with brute force the front door of the conscience; it just quietly slips in the back door of the mind. We must immediately kick it back out that door. To harbor unchaste thoughts and feelings in one’s heart is to be guilty of adultery in the heart. Jesus said, “Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Mat. 5:28).

We must learn to control our thoughts, or our thoughts will control us. That is a pitiable place to be, whether one is controlled by drugs, alcohol, money, or lust. Solomon said, “He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls” (Pro. 25:28; cf. Gal. 6:8; 1 Pet. 2:11).

We Must Put Up A Perimeter Around Our Hearts.

Our third objective is to build an innermost defense that will serve as a bastion against anything that gets past the eyes and mind. It is true that the Bible often uses the words *mind* and *heart* interchangeably, but it also shows a distinction by using them in the same context. For instance, David said, “Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts” (1 Chr. 28:9). Jesus said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself” (Luke 10:27; see also, 1 Sam. 2:35; 1 Chr. 28:9).

The difference in the mind and the heart is that the mind is the workplace of intellect and the heart is the seat of the emotions. Thus our final perimeter is put in place by developing a deep affection for God, spiritual holiness, and our wives. A strong love for our spouse will give strong motivation to remove from our hearts any rival for our sexual attention. That love is to be strong; it should be a force to be reckoned with. Paul said, “Husbands love your wives, even as

Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25). Feeding holy affections and good habits will cause any affection one has left for the world and its ungodly pleasures to starve gradually (cf. 1 Pet. 2:11).

"Why?"—Job Enlisted Reason To Help Him Defeat Sexual Temptation

Most men face serious sexual temptation throughout their lives. It comes frequently in their dating years and less frequently after they marry. But it does not go away until life nears the finish line (if then). In our culture, most men simply never give much thought to sexual temptation being a big deal. In the heat of the moment, they make decisions that have little reason behind them.

Job was wiser than most men. He pondered. He prayed. He planned. He practiced.

As to his pondering, he must have thought about pluses and minuses, risks and benefits, liabilities and profits. What is best for me?

On the one side, lust was natural, pleasurable, and easy. Why fight it? He might have reasoned as some other married men have: "Just because I cannot order does not mean I cannot look at the menu." The problem with looking at that menu is that God said "eat somewhere else" (cf. Pro. 5:15-18). Stay out of that restaurant completely. All philosophies of life, except hedonism, have observed that ultimate happiness and enjoyment cannot come from the life driven by lust. Christianity teaches the control of fleshly desires. Married men do not have the Biblical right to look at other women. They literally "only have eyes for one." Remind yourself, "You do not even know this woman; who are you to be attracted to her? Did not your Master give you your wife?" (cf. 2 Sam. 12:7-8).

Single men can look to choose among the available girls, but they must keep their eyes in check and their minds out of the gutter. Each young man must preserve his eyes for that special one he will soon pledge love and loyalty to. A man is urged to choose a wife in holiness and honor, rather than in the passion of lust

(1 The. 4:4-5). He is expected to stay with her until death separates the two (Mat. 19:9; Rom. 7:2), so each must choose wisely by looking at both outward and inward beauty (1 Pet. 3:1-4).

Young men must not develop a sinful habit that will be difficult to break. Wise and strong single men of all ages should channel their energies into outlets which have nothing to do with sex: hard work, sports, hobbies, doing good for others, and church work. Job might have said, "It will not hurt anything to look. There is no harm in that." Or, as some men reason, "You can look but do not touch." Usually, we hear this statement made just after an attractive person of the opposite sex walks by. God says there is no purity that is only external; true purity is a matter of the heart, which is reflected in the life (1 Cor. 7:34).

One today may say, "Where is the harm in it? I am not hurting anyone by looking at girls." But lust is far from a harmless pastime. Job says that it certainly will be the sinner's ruin if it is not repented of in time. "Is not destruction to the wicked? and a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity?" (Job 31:3). Fools make a mock (Pro. 14:9) and jest (Pro. 10:23) at sin. Tell yourself, "This attraction threatens everything I hold dear." Lust leads to action. "And from the roof he [David] saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon" (2 Sam. 11:2). After looking, David mentally lusted after Bathsheba and then committed physical adultery with her (2 Sam. 11:4). His actions followed the common path: mental adultery, then physical adultery.

In the same context, Job said his heart had not been deceived (or enticed) by a woman, nor had he laid wait at his neighbor's door to seduce his wife (Job 31:9). He said, "For this [adultery] is an heinous crime" (Job 31:11). This sin is heinous because it subverts the family relationship on which God has erected the fabric of human society.

Job might have told himself, "Life is unbearable to live by such tight standards. God could not possibly have intended that. God made women beautiful on purpose. Look at them." Job saw lust as a sin that incurs divine vengeance (Job 31:3). The wrath of the eternal God comes upon the children of disobedience (Eph. 5:6).

Sin alienates the mind from God (Eph. 4:18-19), and this is the punishment of sinners, that they shall be eternally set at a distance from Him (Rev. 22:15).

When Job was tempted by this sin, he restrained himself with the thought, “Doth not he see my ways?” (Job 31:4; cf. Gen. 39:9). Lust is a sin that cannot be hidden from the all-seeing God. A wanton thought cannot be so secret, nor a wanton look so quick, as to escape His cognizance, much less any act of uncleanness so secretly done as to be out of His sight (Heb. 4:13) (Henry). Paul wrote, “God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel” (Rom. 2:16).

Conclusion

When we look back over Job 31:1, it is easy to connect the dots. They are:

- The Connection between Integrity and Covenant
- The Connection between Looking and Thinking
- The Connection between Thinking and Lusting
- The Connection between Lusting and Sexual Sin
- The Connection between Sexual Sin and Misery
- The Connection between the Believer and God.

In short, Christian men must work at maintaining their purity. John said, “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:3). Jesus demonstrated purity of life, mind, and body (Heb. 4:15). He showed us that it could be done (1 Pet. 2:21-22) and then made this final, captivating promise to each of us: “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Mat. 5:8).

On the world’s last day, we will be glad we saved our eyes for that.

Notes

¹ It is unlikely that I will forever keep my sins under wraps. Moses said, “Be sure your sin will find you out” (Num. 32:23). The girls we

look at may “catch us.” The IT guy at work will eventually look at my Web history—and unbeknownst to me he may check it every week. Our wives may not say anything, but they will notice us noticing other women. Those around us are likely to notice the turn of our heads as the coed passes or turn to see what it is that has caught our attention. Unbelievers are observing us to see if there is any tinge of hypocrisy (Tit. 2:8; 1 Pet. 2:12; Phi. 2:14-16). Of course, when they look but do not find what they thought they would (hypocrisy, lust), Christianity becomes far more attractive to them. When we “adorn the doctrine” (Tit. 2:10), they are made to think that there is something powerful in Christianity.

² *Wicked* translates *awāl*, “an unrighteous person.”

³ Through our knowledge of His will revealed in Scripture (Psa. 119:9; Psa. 119:11; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

⁴ He is best known for *The Story of Civilization*, eleven volumes written in collaboration with his wife Ariel Durant and published between 1935 and 1975. He was earlier noted for *The Story of Philosophy*, written in 1926, which one observer described as “a groundbreaking work that helped to popularize philosophy.”

⁵ *chamad*, “to delight in, covet, delectable thing.”

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CHAPTER 26

More Than My Necessary Food: The Proper Esteem For The Word Of God

Eddie Parrish

No book should be esteemed more highly than God's Book. Job was one who understood that and lived it. It was he who eloquently said, "I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food" (New King James Version, Job 23:12). To this passage and the application of it, we turn our attention.

Contextual Considerations of Job 23:12

Remote Context

Job, the beloved patriarch, finds himself the target of a Satanic plot to wreck his faith, thereby proving that God must bribe His creatures to serve Him (Job 1:9-11). Through a series of personal disasters that left him childless (Job 1:18-19), bereft of his wealth (Job 1:13-17), and writhing in the anguish of a debilitating disease (Job 2:7-8), Job then is forced to face the ignorant blathering of friends carelessly pontificating about the underlying causes of his trouble. The major part of the book finds Job countering charges from these "forgers of lies" (Job 13:4) that he is a vile sinner being punished by God because he "drinks iniquity like water" (Job 15:16).

Inspiration's assessment, however, differs greatly from that offered by Job's friends. Consider these statements: "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil"

(Job 1:1). “Then the LORD said to Satan, ‘Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?’” (Job 1:8). “In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong” (Job 1:22). “Then the LORD said to Satan, ‘Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause’” (Job 2:3). “But he said to her, ‘You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?’ In all this Job did not sin with his lips” (Job 2:10).

And so it was, after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, “My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has. Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you. For I will accept him, lest I deal with you according to your folly; because you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has. (Job 42:7-8)

Each of these passages highlights God’s assessment of Job’s character. While it is true that Job admits to being rash (Job 6:3), impatient (Job 21:4), and ignorant (Job 42:3), he never renounces God. His complaints, therefore, are to be understood as genuine expressions of grief and misery by a tortured man, not the type of grumbling and complaining condemned by God in other places (cf. Exo. 16:7; Exo. 17:7; Num. 21; Phi. 2:14). Job was a righteous man.

Immediate Context

Eliphaz, one of Job’s friends, has just finished a speech in which he charges Job with great wickedness and unending iniquity (Job

22:5); he has mistreated the needy (Job 22:6-7); he ignores widows and orphans (Job 22:9); and he is content to follow in the steps of previous generations of fools (Job 22:15-16). Job's friend exhorts him to acquaint himself with God (Job 22:21), receive instruction from God (Job 22:22), and return to God in penitent prayer (Job 22:23-27).

In his response (Job 23:1-17), Job admits to being bitter, but only because he cannot get an audience with God no matter how hard he tries. It is during this defense that Job responds specifically to Eliphaz's admonition to "Receive, please, instruction from His mouth, and lay up His words in your heart" (Job 22:22). The patriarch's rejoinder serves as the launching pad for this lecture, "I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12). Despite allegations to the contrary, Job maintained that he held the Word of God in high regard. Of all the people in the world, no one should possess this trait more than members of the body of Christ.

Why the Bible Deserves Our Esteem

No Book is as Divine

It is the only Divinely-inspired book given to man, claiming this characteristic for itself many times (Psa. 119; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; 2 Pet. 3:16; 1 Cor. 2:12-13; 1 Cor. 14:37; Eph. 3:3-5; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 The. 2:13, et al.).

To claim that the Bible is inspired of God is to claim that God is the ultimate source of the words that make it up. Frank Gaebelin expressed it well,

The original documents of the Bible were written by men, who, though permitted the exercise of their own personalities and literary talents, yet wrote under the control and guidance of the Spirit of God, the result being in every word of the original documents a perfect and errorless recording of the exact message which God desired to give to man. (9)

Two passages that succinctly illustrate this verbal inspiration are 2 Timothy 3:16 and 1 Corinthians 2:9-13. In 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul refers to Scripture as being “given by inspiration of God,” a phrase that translates one word in the Greek text, *theopneustos*, which may be literally translated “God-breathed” (Vincent). The term stresses the divine origin of Scripture.

In 1 Corinthians 2:9-13, Paul refers to certain “things” that God prepared for them that love Him (1 Cor. 2:9). God revealed these things to the apostles by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:10). In verse 11, Paul explains, by drawing from a personal example, how the Spirit knew about those things that were in the mind of God. He states that no one knows what exists in the mind of another unless that person expresses his thoughts in words (1 Cor. 2:11). In the same way, the Holy Spirit, knowing the thoughts in the mind of God, took those thoughts and communicated them to the apostles in words that He specifically chose (1 Cor. 2:13).

According to Paul in Ephesians 3:3-4, when someone reads what an inspired man wrote, he can understand what was revealed to the inspired penman. No other book in the possession of man can sustain the same claims. For a thorough treatment of the evidence for the inspiration of the Bible, consult *Behold! The Word of God* by Kyle Butt.

No Book is as Doable

If God exists; if God is good; if God created human beings as accountable creatures; and if God is to be the final Judge of man, then He must have revealed the criteria that will be used as the basis of His judgment. The Bible contains that information (John 12:48; Rom. 2:16). Because God has revealed in Scripture our obligations as His creation, the Bible is exceedingly practical, skeptical cries of the ignorant notwithstanding.

The Word of God offers instruction and guidance on relationships. Families may learn what God expects of them as they read instructions directed to husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, children, employers, employees, neighbors, friends, and enemies.

The Word of God offers instruction and guidance on religion. If one desires to know what God expects in the arena of worship, read the Bible. If one wants to know how to serve God in daily life, read the Bible.

The Word of God offers instruction and guidance on attitudes, including anger, love, joy, courage, contentment, worry, disappointment, doubt, fear, grief, loneliness, and many others.

The Word of God offers instruction and guidance on moral issues like lying, prejudice, greed, hypocrisy, adultery, drunkenness, and many others.

The nature of these topics and the way in which they are addressed in Scripture allow us to be “doers of the word, and not hearers only” (Jam. 1:22). What God obligates us to do is not beyond our ability to perform. As John wrote, “His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3). No book is as doable as God’s Book.

No Book is as Discerning

Studying the Bible is risky business. Through words on a page, God can expose the human heart. And when He exposes the heart, He exposes one’s real character (Pro. 23:7). This trait of God’s Word is aptly illustrated in Hebrews 4:12, “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Consider these important terms from this passage.

First, the Word is described as “living.” When one is “living,” he retains his ability to operate and function. In this way the Word of God is living. It “lives and abides forever” (1 Pet. 1:23). Second, the Word is “active,” from the same Greek term that gives us our English words *energy* and *energetic*. The term refers to “activity that produces results” (Rienecker 676). Third, the Word is “piercing,” a term meaning to penetrate or to pass through (Rienecker 676). Fourth, the word is “discerning,” a term that comes from the same Greek word that gives us the English *critical*. It refers to the judging of legal cases (Louw 56.23). It conveys the concept of sifting and analyzing evidence (Vincent, IV: 428). The objects of

this sifting are the “thoughts and intents of the heart.” “Thoughts” references the content of one’s reasoning (Louw 30.15). “Intents” references “that which is intended or purposed as the result of thinking” (Louw 30.66).

When one takes all of the above expanded definitions and puts them together, he will find an amazingly incisive description of the power of God’s Word. The Word of God maintains its ability to work and operate. It is effective in producing results (Isa. 55:9-10). It penetrates into the deepest recesses of a person’s heart, critically sifts through and analyzes what’s there (i.e., the contents of one’s reasoning and the plans made as a result of that reasoning), then makes a legal judgment of what it finds. Simply stated, you will not put anything past the Bible or the God who wrote it! No book is as discerning.

No Book is as Divisive

While we normally think of division in a negative light, and understandably so (cf. 1 Cor. 1:10-13), not all division is sinful in itself (cf. Mat. 10:34-38). Controversy and division have always followed God’s word, whether that word was written or spoken. Examples include Jehoiakim and his knife (Jer. 36), the Sanhedrin and their rocks (Acts 7), and Amaziah and his arrogance (Amos 7).

Skeptics continue their attacks on God’s Word today. For example, C. Dennis McKinsey has written, “Every analyst of the Bible should realize that the Book is a veritable miasma [cloud; haze; fog – EP] of contradictions, inconsistencies, inaccuracies, poor science, bad math, inaccurate geography, immoralities, degenerate heroes, false prophecies, boring repetitions, childish superstitions, silly miracles, and dry-as-dust discourse” (71). This kind of attack is typical among outspoken skeptics (Lyons 5-7).

I will not attempt to crawl inside the minds of such skeptics and pretend to know the motivations behind each instance of attack on God’s Word. There may be a thousand different motives scattered throughout the disbelieving community. But among the motives for some, no doubt, is this: if the Bible is true, then one’s life must change to conform to its direction. Lee Strobel, a former atheist,

explained his reasons for previously ignoring the evidence in favor of Christianity. He wrote of “a self-serving and immoral lifestyle that I would be compelled to abandon if I were ever to change my views and become a follower of Jesus” (13). If the Bible is God’s Word, then all of its moral, spiritual, and ethical principles must be embraced and obeyed—and some men are honest enough to admit that those implications are enough to keep them from even considering, much less accepting the evidence. No book is as divisive.

No Book is as Durable

Though it has oft been attacked, the Bible is still here and it still wields an influence for good. Men have boldly claimed to have dealt the Bible mortal wounds, but their claims have never proven to be true. Thomas Paine wrote, “I have now gone through the Bible, as a man would go through a wood with an axe on his shoulder, and fell trees. Here they lie; and the priests, if they can, may replant them. They may, perhaps, stick them in the ground, but they will never make them grow” (as quoted in Lyons 5-6).

Those were bold claims by Paine. Yet how many people gather together multiple times each week to study *The Age of Reason*? Skeptic arrogance notwithstanding, the Bible remains and will remain (1 Pet. 1:23-25; Mat. 24:35). No book is as durable.

20 Traits of the Person Who Respects God’s Word

Having noted several reasons that the Bible deserves our respect, let us turn our attention to what it means to respect the Word of God. When I respect God’s word:

1. I will believe it (Psa. 119:42).
2. I will obey it (Jam. 1:22; John 14:15).
3. I will not turn from it to the right or left (Jos. 1:7).
4. I will not add to nor take from what He said (Rev. 22:18-19).
5. I will want it as much as my body wants food (Job 23:12; Mat. 4:4).
6. I will read it and meditate on it often (Psa. 1:2; Psa. 119:15).
7. I will love it (Psa. 119:14; Psa. 119:24; Psa. 119:47; Psa. 119:97).

8. I will long for it (Psa. 119:131).
9. I will teach it to my children (Deu. 6:4-9; Eph. 6:4).
10. I will stay up nights just to think about it (Psa. 119:148).
11. I will hate evil (Psa. 119:104; Amos 5:15; Rom. 12:9).
12. I will be saddened when it is violated (Psa. 119:136).
13. I will reject human traditions as authoritatively binding (Mat. 15:7-9).
14. I will respect those who preach it (Rom. 10:15).
15. I will not apologize for it (1 Kin. 22:14).
16. I will want others to hear it (Psa. 119:13; Psa. 119:46).
17. I will praise the God who authored it (Psa. 119:164; Psa. 119:171).
18. I will store it in my heart (Psa. 119:11).
19. I will be comforted in affliction (Psa. 119:50; Rom. 15:4).
20. I will live in peace (Psa. 119:165).

Conclusion

In the days of Hosea the prophet, Israel lived in the depths of moral and spiritual depravity. Idolatry was rampant. The wealthy and powerful were beating up the poor and helpless simply because they could. The priests were more interested in helping the highest bidder than in serving the people. In the palace, rulers were too busy pursuing selfish agendas to spend any time in real leadership. Hosea would indict the nation on charges of murder, deceit, lying, breaking covenants, drunkenness, thievery, adultery, and dishonesty in business. The nation was decaying before the prophet's eyes.

His explanation for why things had deteriorated so much centers on their ignorance of God and His revealed will.

Hear the word of the Lord, You children of Israel, For the Lord brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land: "There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land. By swearing and lying, killing and stealing and committing adultery, they break all restraint, with bloodshed

upon bloodshed. Therefore the land will mourn; and everyone who dwells there will waste away with the beasts of the field and the birds of the air; even the fish of the sea will be taken away. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children. (Hos. 4:1-3; Hos. 4:6)

The responsibility is ours to so teach and live that we cause others to increase their respect for God's precious Word. Our future depends on it.

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CHAPTER 27

Eschewing Evil In A Society That Embraces It

Rick Owens

As we go through daily life, Christians are bombarded with images and words that cut at the very core of what we know as Christian culture. It may be in the checkout line at the supermarket, a billboard on the interstate, or the sidewalk at a newsstand where we come into contact with these images. There is no doubt that the very culture in which we live is changing at a rapid pace and not for the better. If one were to have picked up a copy of the May 21st edition of the magazine *Newsweek*, he or she would have been subjected to the very images and words just mentioned. On the cover the reader would have seen a sitting President of the United States of America with a rainbow colored halo looking toward the heavens with the words “THE FIRST GAY PRESIDENT” adorning the bottom of the page. Any well-known figure on that magazine cover would have demonstrated that the war on our Christian culture is at a fevered pitch.

There are those who desire a change in the direction of our nation, culturally speaking, and the sooner the better. To have a destructive effect, it does not have to be the subject of homosexuality or the Bible’s distinct rebuke concerning it (King James Version, Rom. 1:26-28), but simply any subject that can aid in the destruction of our Christian culture. It does not have to be a “hot topic”; the fact that God condemns those that support ideals that are destructive to His cause (Rom. 1:32) should be reason enough for us to avoid anything that will entice us to step a little farther from the Father. The question we must all ask ourselves is, How does one live righteously in a culture gone wrong? Understanding that we live “by

faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7), we must turn to the pages of the Bible for the answer.

The Holy Spirit, through the pen of Job, instructs us in how to answer the above question. Job was a man who did live righteously in a culture gone wrong: he eschewed evil in a culture that embraced it! He is described in the first verse in this manner, “and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil” (Job 1:1). In His conversation with Satan, the Holy Father asked, “Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil” (Job 1:8). It is clear that Job is a perfect example of how we should behave in a culture that embraces evil. Using Job as our example notice first:

Job Was Steadfast

Emotionally Steadfast

Regarding the description given of Job the text does not indicate sinless perfection, but maturity as a child of God (Winton). One might say that Job was steadfast in his life and his faith, but how can people today benefit from Job’s steadfastness? They, too, must be steadfast emotionally as well.

We must be willing to change when we discover that we have something that is wrong in our lives, according to God’s standards. Paul said, “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death” (2 Cor. 7:10). Godly sorrow, which results in true repentance, is the very emotion that makes an individual sorry that he or she has been involved in anything of which God disapproves or that he or she has not done something that should have been done. However, Paul mentions two types of sorrow. The other one is worldly sorrow which makes a person sorry that he or she was caught doing something that was wrong. An example of this type of sorrow can be seen in King Saul after he refused to destroy the Amalekites utterly (1 Sam. 15:26). He tried to present himself as being truly sorry, but God and Samuel would not be fooled!

Peter is the perfect example of what godly sorrow truly is. After he had denied the Lord three times and heard the cock crow, Jesus turned and looked at Peter (Luke 22:60-61). At that point Luke records, “And Peter went out, and wept bitterly” (Luke 22:62). The difference between the two is that Peter could have simply left the situation; after all, the Lord was going to the Cross. Instead, he repented and continued to do what was right in a culture that did wrong!

Though he knew he was righteous, Job was willing to change if he needed to do so. In answering Bildad, Job said, “Whom, though I were righteous, yet would I not answer, but I would make supplication to my judge” (Job 9:15). He would not have questioned God, but simply would have humbly entreated Him as his Judge and acted accordingly. What a difference could be seen in our culture if people would simply entreat God as the Ruler of the world and abide by His laws!

It must be realized that all sin is a sin against God whether committed against another or not. David understood his adultery was a sin against God even though Uriah was murdered as a result. He told Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD” (2 Sam. 12:13). The prodigal son also realized this when he said, “I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son” (Luke 15:21). Eschewing evil in a culture that embraces it requires that we become emotionally steadfast and always have the willingness to repent and change.

Mentally Steadfast

The mind has to be trained properly before it can truly be beneficial to one that endeavors to live right in a culture gone wrong. Training of the mind begins by donning the armor of God. After Paul admonished the Ephesian brethren to behave properly in their relationships with parent to child, child to parent, servant to master, and master to servant, he went on to tell them how to accomplish that. He told them:

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord,
and in the power of his might. Put on the
whole armor of God, that ye may be able to

stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Eph. 6:10-17)

Paul was giving the description of a steadfast Christian that had prepared himself to fight the good fight! The weapons that Paul described can only be gained with a deliberate study of the Word of God. He told Timothy, “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). It stands to reason that if diligent study makes one unashamed, then a lack of proper study should shame anyone that claims Christ as their Leader.

Commitment to steadfastness is a must! David said, “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me” (Psa. 101:3). He was determined to be faithful to the Lord and was willing to do what was necessary to be successful which included monitoring his behavior.

Job was successful in eschewing evil in a culture that embraced it by following the same guidelines that Paul instructed the Romans and today’s reader to follow. Listen thoughtfully to the apostle, “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable,

and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:2). Would it not have been easy for Job to surrender the fight because of disgust at his situation? Instead he refused to conform to an ungodly culture, and conformity should never be an option today! Commitment to steadfastness can only come after commitment to God has been made. A culture that embraces evil can be changed by following one simple commandment, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15-16).

Physically Steadfast

Becoming physically steadfast begins with one’s presence at the worship assembly. How can steadfastness be shown when absences prevail? Job’s consistency in his worship to God can clearly be seen, “And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job **continually**” (Job 1:5, emp. RO). Though he lived under different guidelines, he never shirked his responsibility toward God in his worship.

The Hebrews writer explained clearly the importance of one being present at the assemblies of the saints (Heb. 10:23-26). Christians receive encouragement and edification at the services of the Lord that cannot be gained anywhere else. If the public witnessed proper dedication from Christians, maybe they could be influenced to eschew evil as well.

One’s physical steadfastness must be demonstrated by the company he keeps. Paul declared, “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Cor. 15:33). It is not possible to embrace those that revel in sin and be faithful to God at the same time. It was Christ Who said, “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Mat. 6:24). The culture cannot be changed if Christians act as if it is proper to embrace evil!

Job Served

He Recognized

Job had one goal in mind: heaven. All people have goals of some kind. Even infants have goals, though they do not realize it consciously. They want to be held, to be fed, and to be loved. As one grows and matures, goals are expanded and may include recreational goals, job related goals, or family goals; but all have goals. Goals must be identified and recognized before they can be reached. Once a goal has been recognized, one must focus with determination to achieve it. Paul said, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phi. 3:13-14). Peter is a good example of what happens when one takes his eyes off the intended goal. After having stepped out onto the water, he watched the crashing waves and listened to the howling wind of the storm, took his eyes off of Jesus, and began to sink (Mat. 14:30).

Job also recognized what his relationship with God should be. If we are going to be successful today in a culture that embraces evil, we too, must recognize what our relationship with God should be. We must be able to recognize the example given by Jesus and how it relates to someone in today’s world.

Christ’s life must be recognized for what it means. He is the example people are to follow as they live in a culture that embraces evil. One must “hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Mat. 5:6). To hunger and thirst are the most basic desires that any living creature has. Man cannot go many days without food and even less time without water. During times when food and water are not available, the body will crave both. The desire for Christ and His word should be even stronger than the desire for physical food.

Christ’s death must also be recognized for what it means. This is the heart of the Gospel: the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. In particular, His blood that was freely given is what justifies man before the God of heaven (Rom. 5:9). Without the selfless sacrifice of

Christ, it is not possible to live righteously in a culture that embraces evil. Jesus said, after giving thanks for the cup, "Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Mat. 26:27-28). Paul would later explain how one comes into contact with His soul-saving blood (Rom. 6:3-4).

Recognition of the meaning of Christ's resurrection is essential. There is power in the resurrection of Christ from the dead. However, there is no power in the death of so called "latter day" prophets. A preacher once said one time, "If one could go to the hadean realm and ask if Mohammed was there, if Confucius was there, if Joseph Smith was there, or any other false prophet, they would hear a 'yes, we are.'" But, like Peter told those on Pentecost, "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day" (Acts 2:29). Christ is the only One sitting at the right hand of the Father as time still passes on (Acts 1:9; Acts 7:55). The Lord that all Christians serve is powerful and the only true God!

He Simplified

When it came right down to it, Job concentrated wholly upon the spiritual necessities of life. Job must have been confused when it seemed that his whole world was falling to pieces around him as he did not receive the much needed support from his family and friends. When his wife encouraged him to curse God and die, he said, "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips" (Job 2:10). He simply got a potsherd and sat among the ashes and scraped his boils (Job 2:8). He did not allow the trials of this life to interfere with his faithfulness to God.

At times, Christians need to simplify their lives. When we put aside earthly desires and focus on Christ, our lives become better for it. Paul is not telling his readers to ignore their responsibilities of life, but instead to place God where He should be on the priority list and never allow things to come between self and God. Cluttered lives hinder spiritual growth. Ballgames on Wednesday nights, fishing

trips on Sunday mornings, Super Bowls on Sunday evenings, or anything else that takes God's place in the lives of individuals will hinder the spiritual growth of anyone. Christ demanded, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Mat. 6:33).

He Glorified

Even though Job was miserable physically, mentally, and emotionally, he still glorified and praised God. He never wavered in his dedication and refused to sin against God or to blame Him for what had happened to him.

Christians must glorify God in action. Paul said, "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phi. 3:20). Lives must be led in such a way that is indicative of the One in Whom they believe and to Whom they belong. Christ said that Christians were the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Mat. 5:13-14), so it stands to reason that those in the world should be able to look at the lifestyle of one that professes Christianity and notice that he is different. If that is not possible, that person needs a lifestyle evaluation!

Christians must glorify God in their attitudes. Their attitudes must never be that of "I have arrived, so now I can rest." Is it plausible to think that the Lord would have desired to rest as He carried His cross toward Golgotha? Instead of rest, He, however, received rebuke every step of the way, yet He continued to reach for the goal He had set which was the salvation of mankind. Until we arrive in heaven, we must continue to glorify God in our lives as we live in a culture that embraces evil.

Job Was Separate

In His Deliberation

Job separated himself from the world through his deliberation or thoughts. Solomon said, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Pro. 4:23). He would later pen, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Pro. 23:7). Christ said that sin always begins in the heart, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts,

murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man” (Mat. 15:19-20). If one maintains a pure heart in a culture that embraces evil, he is on his way to living the way that God desires for him to live. During the time of Noah, Moses recorded, “And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5). We cannot hide our thoughts from God, so it is of the utmost importance that we guard the thoughts of our hearts (Psa. 94:11).

There are things that we **must** incorporate into our lives if we are going to guard our thoughts. We must guard what we see. The nation and world in which we live is dealing with an epidemic we know as pornography. The apostle John warned his readers against things such as this:

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. (1 John 2:15-17)

Though temporary joy may be found in the things of the world, there will come a time when they will pass away. What we see can clearly cause us to lose our souls. Christ admonished those listening to Him:

But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy

members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. (Mat. 5:28-29)

We must guard what we hear. If hearing evil is to be avoided, we must place ourselves in a position to hear things that are good. “Wisdom” encouraged those to “Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things” (Pro. 8:6). Hearing the Gospel is the way that anyone learns about the salvation offered through Christ and His sacrifice for mankind (Rom. 10:17).

We must guard what we say. A well-guarded tongue is an asset to anyone that longs for the glory of heaven. Solomon wrote, “Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles” (Pro. 21:23). James would later warn his readers that an unruly tongue would cause more trouble in a little while than can be fixed in a lifetime, “Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth” (Jam. 3:5)! Peter gave the recipe for a peaceful life when he said, “For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile” (1 Pet. 3:10).

In His Demeanor

Job separated himself from the world through his demeanor or actions. Listen again to the description of Job, “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil...And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil” (Job 1:1; Job 1:8). He acted differently from all those that surrounded him in his life.

Like Job, our actions today must be different if we want to be able to live righteously in a culture that embraces evil. With confidence it can be said that Job would never have been dishonest with his neighbor. Christians must be honest in their dealings with those around them. How sad it is when a Christian lives in such a way that no one can place trust in him. Paul demanded, “Providing for honest

things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men” (2 Cor. 8:21). Even though we cannot allow a hypocrite to cost us our souls, it is still discouraging to witness a supposed Christian being dishonest in his life, in either word or deed. Peter told his readers, “Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Pet. 2:12). The child of God would never willingly bring reproach upon Christ or the church He built with His own blood (Acts 20:28).

How is it possible to influence a culture that embraces evil if a Christian lives like the world? Peter described God’s people like this, “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9). Under the Old Testament Law, the Levites were saved in order to serve and it is the same for Christians today. When Peter said, “Show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9), he meant to “publish or celebrate” His praises (Thayer). This is accomplished through the actions of one that is a faithful Christian.

Attitudes influence actions and people. Peter said, “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear” (1 Pet. 3:1-2). If a wife has a poor attitude in not wanting to be in subjection to her husband, it is unlikely that she will be very successful in converting him to the Gospel of Christ. Paul told Timothy, “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12). Considering the fact that Christians are examples of how a follower of Christ is to think and behave, it should make us take that responsibility a little more seriously. Remember, Christians are to influence the world for the better, not be corrupted by the world!

In His Dress

It is clear that Job was a righteous man who was faithful to God. He would not have dressed in such a way that would bring shame upon the Lord. Paul admonished Timothy, “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:22). One of the things from which we are to flee that will certainly cause one to lust is a half-dressed member of the opposite sex. We may come into contact with a person of this type purely by accident; however, we are still to flee any situation that would cause us to sin. When we intentionally come into contact with others who are immodestly dressed, it is extremely unwise and sinful. There are many places in which this can happen. Such places would include the public swimming pool, the beach, water parks, or any other place where the lack of clothing is accepted. Sadly, it is not surprising when attending the worship services of the Lord that one may witness shirts that are too low, skirts and dresses that are too short, or pants and slacks that are too tight.

Those of the world and those like the world will be quick to point out that it is not the place of any man or woman to set the standards of the day when it comes to dress. They are exactly right. It is God that sets the standards to which we are to submit. God set the standards for modest dress thousands of years ago. When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, they realized they were naked and made for themselves aprons out of fig leaves (Gen. 3:7). Their choice of clothing or the standard by which they chose their clothing did not please God and He made for them proper clothing. Instead of aprons of leaves, God made coats of animal skins for the first couple (Gen. 3:21). According to Strong, the word *coat* means to cover the shoulder, the upper end of the arm, where the garments hang (“Katheph”). When Moses recorded that all priests were required to wear undergarments beneath their robes, he explained the whole purpose of those garments was to “cover their nakedness,” and he went on to say that included the loins and the thighs (Exo. 28:42). Strong defines the loins as beginning with the waist and the small of the back (“Mothen”) and, of course, the thigh is the part of the body

that goes from the hip all the way to the knee. The problem begins when people change God's definitions to what they desire and ignore what He has already said. His definition of naked has not changed for six thousand years! Situation ethics cannot be employed to defend one's actions. Just because it is deemed acceptable by the world to be naked at the beach or swimming pool does not mean that God does not consider it a sin that will cause one to lose his soul.

Conclusion

Christians can expect impurity and evil to exist as long as the world stands, but one day the Lord will return and all the things that the world has to offer will be destroyed (2 Pet. 3:10). As God's people strive to live righteously in the world, they must have the courage of which Solomon spoke (Pro. 28:1), the conviction Vashti demonstrated before the king of Persia and his princes (Est. 1:11-12), and the commitment that Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah demonstrated before Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon (Dan. 3:16-18). All these characteristics can be seen in Job as he eschewed evil in a culture that embraced it!

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CHAPTER 28

Among The Ashes: Blessing God Even When Things Go Wrong

David Wright

For many years, my father, Doyle Wright, owned a tree service. He trimmed trees, removed them, and ground out stumps. As boys, my brothers and I often worked by his side. We threw logs onto the back of the dump truck, fed brush into a grinder, and raked up broken twigs.

A full truck box meant a trip to the nearest city dump. For the pleasure of spending time with my father, I usually chose to ride along. But these visits were less than inspiring. The dump was a wasteland of rusting appliances, broken furniture, soggy cardboard, and bags of trash. Everywhere, loose garbage littered the ground.

But worse than the ugly sights at the city dump is its smell. The rotting refuse assaults the nostrils with an unforgettably sour stench. Does such a place remind the visitor of the beauty of God's creation? Does the city dump invite worship or reflection upon the Lord's infinite wisdom?

Not quite. But the city dump was precisely where Job found himself. According to the Scriptures, "he sat in the midst of the ashes" (New King James Version, Job 2:8). The ash heap just outside an Arabic village was the place to which its inhabitants brought their "rubbish, dry dung, and rotting carcasses." Occasionally, the refuse was burned. The accumulation of ashes and rubbish often made the

ash heap the highest point in the vicinity. Scavenging dogs and social outcasts frequented the place (Owens 465).

The change in Job's circumstances is stupendous. The man is introduced to the Bible reader as a wealthy Arab sheik, "the greatest of all the people of the East." The man owns "seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and a very large household [i.e., a great number of servants]" (Job 1:3). Job's seven sons and three daughters are his delight, and he enjoys the deep respect of a community that admires his wise judgment and philanthropy to the poor.

But most rewarding is Job's relationship with God. He revels in the knowledge that the Lord is good to him. He never imagines that his extraordinary financial success is the result of his own keen intellect or business sense. Job's possessions are gifts, and he knows where they come from. Job is a man at peace with the world and the God who made it, a man of remarkable integrity who reveres the Lord and hates evil.

And then, for no reason, a flood of troubles sweep away Job's house as if he had built it upon the sands of selfishness, faithlessness, deceit, or violence. On that tragic day, the waves of calamity thunder against Job in a crescendo of horror. The Sabeian raid on his "working stock" is a serious economic loss. The lightning bolts that kill his sheep take away "the source of food and clothing" for servants and family. The Chaldean raid on the camels strips away Job's high social status. And the cyclone that collapses the eldest son's house? That worst of tragedies not only blights Job's heart but also puts an end to his name (Owens 463).

When Satan entered the assembly of the sons of God, he challenged the Lord to "stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!" (Job 1:11). The Hebrew verb rendered "curse" (*barak*) is literally "bless." Speaking euphemistically, the Adversary predicted that the smitten Job would bless God out (Owens 461). Job did indeed bless the Lord—but not in the euphemistic sense Satan had bargained for.

After learning of all his grievous losses, “Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped” (Job 1:20). Rending the outer garment and shaving the head were customary mourning rituals. Thus, Job acted “consciously” and not “impetuously” (Hartley 77). Considering the circumstances, though, there was nothing ordinary in Job’s acknowledgment of God’s sovereignty.

Bestselling author Mitch Albom has related a story about his religious mentor, Albert Lewis. Rinah, the Jewish rabbi’s daughter, died during a severe asthma attack, the first and last of her life. Lewis admitted that he had cursed God: “I asked him over and over, ‘Why her? What did this little girl do? She was four years old. She didn’t hurt a soul’” (Albom 180).

Job lost 10 children. He lost his property, his position, his status. Nevertheless, he prostrated himself before God and said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21). These words of faith acknowledged the sovereignty of God. He was the source of all gifts, and He had the right to bestow or withdraw them according to His will. The triple use of the personal name Yahweh (translated “LORD” in the NKJV) adds conviction to Job’s profession (Hartley 78).

Incredibly, Job’s ordeal had only just begun. The Adversary “struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And he took for himself a potsherd with which to scrape himself while he sat in the midst of the ashes” (Job 2:7-8). Perhaps Job’s malady was elephantiasis. His symptoms included “breeding of worms” (Job 7:5), “horrible dreams” (Job 7:14), “sensation of choking” (Job 7:15), “fetid breath” (Job 19:17), “corrosion of the bones” (Job 30:17), and “blackening and falling off of the skin” (Job 30:30). The swelling limbs and darkening skin cause the victim of this disease to resemble an elephant (Owens 464-65).

Job’s grotesquely ruined health stressed his wife to the breaking point. “Do you still hold fast to your integrity?” she asked. “Curse God and die!” (Job 2:9). The Targum and some rabbinic references

name Job's wife Dinah, and "in the Testament of Job she is called Sitis, a name derived from Ausitis, the LXX translation of UZ" (Clines 53). Her actual name, of course, is unknown.

But that Job's wife encourages him to respond to suffering in the very manner Satan had predicted is known (Vischer 132). Job still "holds fast to his integrity," the Lord tells Satan, "although you incited Me against him, to destroy him" (Job 2:3). And Satan replies, "Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!" (Job 2:4-5).

Although Job was not privy to this conversation, he did know that his wife's suggestion smacked of utter folly. "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks," he said (Job 2:10). According to Clines, Job's retort meant: "You talk like a low-class, irreligious woman. Such words are beneath you" (54). But Hartley insisted that Job used "the strongest Hebrew word for 'fool.' It denotes one who completely renounces God's ways" (84).

The folly suggested by Job's wife added to his sorrows. But he understood her feelings. She was not a wicked woman. She was a woman overwhelmed with anguish. Like him, she had lost everything—her financial security, her social and moral standing in the community, her children, and now her husband's health. Job's reproof was therefore mild. He did not say that she was an utterly foolish woman but rather that she was talking like one.

Job then asked his wife a question that revealed his unchanged commitment to honor the Lord: "Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" (Job 2:10). The perspective expressed in this question paralleled the earlier affirmation that "the LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away" (Job 1:21).

This scene concludes with the observation that "in all this Job did not sin with his lips" (Job 2:10). Old Testament wisdom literature sees the mouth of man as an accurate reflection of the person within. Solomon says that "the words of a man's mouth are deep waters" (Pro. 18:4). If Job in his ordeal does not sin against God with his lips, then he does not sin against Him in his heart either.

However, this completely submissive attitude eventually gives way to anger and despair. Cursing the day of his birth, Job cries, “Why did I not die at birth? Why did I not perish when I came from the womb? Why did the knees receive me? Or why the breasts, that I should nurse?” (Job 3:11-12). Not content with wishing that he had never been born, he also questions God’s management of the world. “Why,” asks Job, “is light given to a man whose way is hidden, and whom God has hedged in?” (Job 3:23).

It is argued that there is an “unbridgeable gap between the personality of Job in the two sections [i.e., the prose prologue and the poetic dialogue]. The poetic speeches present him as a rebel, daring to criticize the ways of God bitterly, while in the prologue he appears as an obedient, submissive person” (Hoffman 163). This alleged discrepancy leads Gordis to the conclusion that the book of Job “is a work of creative imagination” (66). And Pope suggests that the “naive view” of the book as a historical document “need not be taken seriously” (XXX).

But the authors of the Bible certainly took this view seriously. Ezekiel warned captive Israel that a land persisting in faithlessness to God would suffer famine. Even if “Noah, Daniel, and Job” were in such a land, the Lord said, “they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness” (Eze. 14:14). Plainly, the inspired prophet considered Job a real personage in the same sense Daniel was—and Daniel was a contemporary. Another inspired writer reminded his readers that they had “heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful” (Jam. 5:11). Would such a reminder offer any true comfort to suffering Christians if they understood the story of Job to be nothing more than a myth?

Job is no plastic saint, a man who endures anything and everything with a painted smile. The most righteous person on earth, he initially responds to his calamities with extraordinary faith, courage, and wisdom. But unrelenting suffering thins his resolve to the breaking point, threatening to prove Satan correct after all. Job

never does curse God, but he certainly does angrily question the Lord's management of his affairs.

Fine believes that this transition from quiet resignation to angry despair is too abrupt. That is, the Job of the prologue and the Job of the dialogue cannot be the same person (28). By the third chapter of the book, "Job is already at the end of his endurance, or patience" (Ginsberg 12).

Overlooked here is the significant time lapse the text implies. The Bible says that "when Job's three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, each one came from his own place—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. For they had made an appointment together to come and mourn with him, and to comfort him" (Job 2:11). For seven days and nights these friends sat on the ash heap with Job and shared in his great grief, swaying their heads in sorrow and moaning with him (Owens 466).

But how many days passed between the onset of Job's affliction and the arrival of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar? Did they receive an email or text message from the land of Uz? Did they drop everything at the office, jump in their SUV's, and hurry to the ash heap? In those ancient times, both communication and travel were painfully slow. As Owens put it, "it took a long time for the news 'of all this evil' to be carried from Job to the land of each of three friends" (466). How long? Surely, the assembling of the friends by appointment required a minimum of several weeks.

Viewing Job as a historical person whose moods and feelings change over time is vital to the interpretation of his worship experience. No thinking person can draw inspiration in adversity from a mere caricature of righteousness. Job is a real person. His suffering is real. His worship is real.

What, then, can the Christian today learn from Job's reverence for God? He, too, may find himself sitting among the ashes. A two-year-old daughter dies from leukemia. A cherished spouse commits adultery with an attractive coworker and files for divorce so that she can "be happy again." Or illness and staggering medical costs force

a foreclosure and the loss of a home that is almost paid for. Why should anyone bless God when things go terribly wrong?

First, a suffering person should bless God because He is worthy. “How,” Klink asks, “shall we believe in a good God when the fields of a thousand battles are dunged with the carcasses of human butchery” or “when the sky is clear and the earth dry?” (107; cf. Torrance 157). Lamenting his own misery in contrast with the prosperity of godless neighbors, Job pursues the same question: “Why do the wicked live and become old, yes, become mighty in power? Their descendants are established with them in their sight, and their offspring before their eyes. Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them. Their bull breeds without failure; their cows calve without miscarriage” (Job 21:7-10).

Life often makes no sense. Righteous Job is sitting in the city dump, whereas his wicked neighbors are having a party. But “for no reason” is a key element in Job’s story (Balentine 497).

When the Lord draws attention to His upright servant, Satan replies, “Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side?” (Job 1:9-10). The Adversary insinuates that God is not worthy of untainted devotion. Job honors God only for the rich rewards worship brings. The Lord-serving man of Uz is, in fact, a self-serving leech. He does not fear God “for nothing.”

In the second heavenly scene, the Hebrew adverb rendered “for nothing” appears again—this time in the mouth of God. Job still “holds fast to his integrity,” the Lord tells Satan, “although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause” (Job 2:3). Without cause. For nothing. This lack of any discernible reason makes Job’s ordeal unbearable.

However, it is the senselessness of bitter suffering that compels God’s people either to accept or reject His true character. Vischer explains that “the ground and meaning of the whole creation is that God wills to have man face to face with him as a creature who lives by his goodness and for his goodness, and who loves not some abstract good, but God himself, as God loves him” (132). Suffering people

who love the Lord simply because He is God give Him greater honor than their successful neighbors ever could. The anguished prayer of a man who loses his young wife and two toddlers in a house fire speaks far more eloquently of God's worthiness than the generous donation of a prosperous businessman who gives 90% of his income to missionaries.

Second, a person should bless God when things go wrong because suffering can yield rich spiritual rewards. In the preceding sentence, the operative word is *can*. Suffering itself is no guarantee of deeper faith, improved character, or greater dependence upon God. The horrors of the Holocaust, for example, tempted many survivors to become atheists (Overduin 405).

Perhaps my personal experience will illustrate the importance of "can." I am writing this manuscript with the aid of adaptive technologies for the blind—screen reading software and a Braille printer. Through the years, countless acquaintances and friends have voiced the assumption that blindness heightens other senses. False assumption. Congenital glaucoma is responsible for my vision loss. The genetic misfiring that caused blindness has made my ears susceptible to infection. The resulting hearing loss is mild to moderate for a person of my age. For blindness to be accompanied by other physical limitations is, in fact, common. Diabetes, a leading cause of blindness in the United States, deadens feeling in the fingertips and therefore makes learning Braille difficult or even impossible.

Nevertheless, it is true that people who cope well with physical disabilities have learned to depend upon whatever senses remain. A blind person can safely cross a busy street by relying upon his hearing and the feel of the long white cane gripped in his hand. Even though unable to hear horns, sirens, and train whistles, a deaf person can maneuver safely through busy traffic by relying upon his vision.

What is the point? Satan insinuates that if Job loses everything—his possessions, his children, his health, the support of his wife, his standing in the community, the respect of his friends—he will have nothing left. But Job sees his ordeal differently. When he loses everything, he still has something. God. No matter how desperate he

feels, Job continues to depend upon the Lord. “Though He slay me,” says the man of Uz, “yet will I trust Him” (Job 13:15).

The firm decision to depend upon the Lord is what transforms “can” into “will.” The suffering person who trusts God not only can but also will enjoy rich spiritual rewards. In Job’s case, grievous pain produces deepened intimacy, insight, and faith. “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear,” Job says, “but now my eye sees You” (Job 42:5).

In the opening scenes of the book of Job, the reader meets a man whose life is in perfect order (Schofield 239). Like his friends, he probably believes that good things always happen to good people and that bad things always happen to bad people. He is a man with so much money and social clout that a bit of snobbishness is almost inevitable. Evidence for this appears in one of Job’s laments. “Now they mock me,” he says, “men younger than I, whose fathers I disdained to put with the dogs of my flock” (Job 30:1).

But the Job presented in the closing scenes of the book has become a different man. By bitter experience, he learns that people innocent of any secret sin or wretched crime against heaven can and do suffer miserably, that pat answers to painful questions answer nothing, that affliction calls for compassion and not smugness, and that God manages the world wisely even when suffering people cannot see His purposes. Job’s horrific ordeal has completely humbled him. “I have uttered what I did not understand,” Job confesses, “things too wonderful for me, which I did not know” (Job 42:3).

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CHAPTER 29

It Isn't Funny When Just Men Become The Joke

Billy Bland

Most people can appreciate a funny joke as long as it is clean and is not designed to hurt or belittle other people. There is a time to laugh (King James Version, Ecc. 3:4). The Word of God speaks of the benefits of a “merry heart.” The Proverbs writer stated, “A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken” (Pro. 15:13); “All the days of the afflicted *are* evil: but he that is of a merry heart *hath* a continual feast” (Pro. 15:15); “A merry heart doeth good *like* a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones” (Pro. 17:22); and “Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works” (Ecc. 9:7). However, there are times when jokes are not funny. It is not funny when just men become the joke! None of us should think it is funny when men are suffering. Our “jokes” should never seek to destroy the reputation of good men and/or belittle them. Belittling people is indeed being little! Unfortunately, the man of our study was one who had to endure the mockery and disdain of others.

It is difficult for us to imagine the amount and the intensity of the physical and mental suffering Job endured. Job was a God-fearing man who was blessed with a wife, ten children, material wealth, friends, respect, and evidently good health. However, in a very brief time, the conditions of his life took a radical and dreadful change. He lost his material wealth, his precious children to death, and his physical body was plagued “with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown” (Job 2:7). This would be enough to crush the faith of some men. However, the method of afflictions on Job was not

finished. Job's "friends" came to comfort him. They were astonished at the severity of his afflictions.

Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him. And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice, and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven. So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great. (Job 2:11–13)

It would have been good if his friends had remained silent. However, in their minds, they knew the cause as well as the solution to all of Job's problems. He, in some way, obviously had sinned against God because God would not afflict someone with such tragedies unless they had offended God. Hence the solution (according to them) was for Job to repent and confess his sins and God would be gracious and forgive him. Job, however, maintained his innocence and consequently also had to endure the verbal assaults from his friends. Added to all of these sufferings, Job also had become the brunt of the jokes and mockery of others. One would think that a man in the condition of Job would have found pity, even among vile people, but such was not the case. What mental anguish Job must have felt in addition to the physical sufferings he experienced!

Job Is Mocked

Job endured his friends' accusations against him. Now he answers them.

And Job answered and said, No doubt but ye *are* the people, and wisdom shall die with you. But I have understanding as well as you; I *am* not inferior to you: yea, who knoweth not such things as these? I am *as* one mocked of his neighbour, who calleth upon God, and he answereth him: the just upright *man is* laughed to scorn. (Job 12:1–4)

Job rebukes his friends. He uses irony in his rebuttal to them. Ironically, he states that wisdom is summed up in his accusers and when they die, there will be no more wisdom! Job exclaims that he has wisdom just as they. He is not inferior to them. He was one who called upon God and God answered him. However, Job is one “mocked of his neighbor.” He was “laughed to scorn.” The words *mocked* and *laughed* in the above text are from the same Hebrew word and means “laughter (in merriment or defiance): derision, laughter (-ed to scorn, -ing), mocked, sport” (Strong). Job was a “laughing stock” to his neighbor.

Regarding the intensity of the mockery he endured, note the following sad words from Job:

But now *they that are* younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock. Yea, whereto *might* the strength of their hands *profit* me, in whom old age was perished? For want and famine *they were* solitary; fleeing into the wilderness in former time desolate and waste. Who cut up mallows by the bushes, and juniper roots *for* their meat. They were driven forth from among *men*, (they cried after them as *after* a thief;) To dwell in the cliffs of the valleys, *in* caves of the earth, and *in* the rocks. Among the bushes they brayed; under the nettles they

were gathered together. *They were* children of fools, yea, children of base men: they were viler than the earth. And now am I their song, yea, I am their byword. They abhor me, they flee far from me, and spare not to spit in my face. (Job 30:1–10)

The words but now are a stark contrast between Job's former condition and his present condition. One should read all of chapter twenty-nine to understand the complete thought. Here a few passages are given to give an idea of the marked contrast of Job's life.

Moreover Job continued his parable, and said, Oh that I were as *in* months past, as *in* the days *when* God preserved me; When his candle shined upon my head, *and when* by his light I walked *through* darkness; As I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God *was* upon my tabernacle; When the Almighty *was* yet with me, *when* my children *were* about me; When I washed my steps with butter, and the rock poured me out rivers of oil; When I went out to the gate through the city, *when* I prepared my seat in the street! The young men saw me, and hid themselves: and the aged arose, *and* stood up. The princes refrained talking, and laid *their* hand on their mouth. (Job 29:1–9)

Job describes the former prosperity he enjoyed as well as the respect that was shown unto him by those about him. "But now" it is vastly different. The young people, whose fathers Job would not even allow to sit with the dogs of his flock, hold Job in derision! Those who are mocking Job are the offscouring of society! They live as vagabonds and live off what they can find (mallows and juniper roots). They are driven from among men and must find their homes

in caves of the earth and rocks. They are children of fools and children of base men. Though “they were viler than the earth” (Job 30:8), Job was their song and their byword (mockery). They even spared not to spit in his face (a more insulting thing is hard to imagine!).

Other Righteous Ones Who Were Mocked

Jesus Christ

God, Who left heaven and came to earth for the temporal and eternal good of mankind, was mocked! Notice the following statements with emphasis on the mocking of Jesus:

And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put *it* upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!... And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify *him*. (Mat. 27:29; Mat. 27:31)

When they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him. (Mark 15:20)

For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on. (Luke 18:32)

And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote *him*. (Luke 22:63)

And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked *him*, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate. (Luke 23:11)

And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar. (Luke 23:36)

The word *mocked* means “to jeer at, i.e. deride: mock” (Strong). With the mind’s eye, one can go back and see the mocking which the Son of God had to endure. One can mentally visualize the jeering the Roman soldiers and other vile men and women would have heralded at Jesus Christ. Yet, Jesus had done no wrong. The mocking Jesus endured did not come as a surprise. Before Jesus ever came to earth, He knew He was going to be rejected and ridiculed. David prophesied of Jesus’ rejection by stating; “But I *am* a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, *saying*, He trusted on the LORD *that* he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him” (Psa. 22:6–8). Likewise, Isaiah foretold Jesus’ rejection of men by saying; “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were *our* faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not” (Isa. 53:3).

The Apostles

When the Gospel was about to be preached in its fullness for the first time, some mocked at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles. The crowd who had gathered in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost did not understand how the apostles were able to speak in languages they had not previously learned. The Bible says; “And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine” (Acts 2:12–13). Peter answered the charge and kept on preaching.

Paul was given the privilege of preaching God’s Word among the Grecian philosophers on Mars’ Hill in Athens. The Bible says, “And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this *matter*” (Acts 17:32). Even though some mocked, Paul kept on preaching the Word of God.

Just as Jesus knew He would be ridiculed and rejected, so did His apostles. Jesus had prepared His disciples by forewarning them.

Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. (Mat. 5:10–12)

Jesus knew He would be rejected and He knew His disciples would likewise be rejected. He warned, “The disciple is not above *his* master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more *shall they call* them of his household?” (Mat. 10:24–25).

Nehemiah And The Jews

When Nehemiah learned his beloved home city of Jerusalem lay in waste and that the walls of the city were torn down, he determined that with the help of God, he and his fellow Jews would return to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. He gained the favor of the king and was granted permission to leave the land of captivity for the purpose of rebuilding the wall. The Samaritans, however, were not pleased that the Jews had returned to seek the welfare of Jerusalem. Among the various ways they responded to Nehemiah and the Jews, one was mockery. The Word of God records,

But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned? Now Tobiah the Ammonite *was* by

him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall. (Neh. 4:1–3)

In spite of the mocking and other forms of opposition, Nehemiah and the others continued to work on the wall until they completed their goal. “So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth *day of the month* Elul, in fifty and two days. And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard *thereof*, and all the heathen that *were* about us saw *these things*, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God” (Neh. 6:15–16).

The Lord's Church Today

The Lord's church is distinct. It is distinct from the world. It is also distinct from denominations. It is neither Jewish nor Catholic nor Protestant. God is the One Who designed the church. Consequently, its design and mission was not according to man's wisdom. Paul wrote, “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:10–11). Jesus Christ is its builder—“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mat.16:18). The church has a threefold mission: (1) Evangelism (Mat. 28:18-20); (2) Edification (Heb. 10:24-25); and (3) Benevolence (Gal.6:10 Jam. 1:27). Members of the church are “Christians” (Acts 11:26). They do not wear denominational names and do not seek to turn the church into something other than what our Lord designed. Some in the world love darkness rather than light and consequently ridicule and oppose the light of God's Word. Denominations, wishing not to be exposed as the work of man, will mock the Lord's church. People at times will ridicule members of the church by calling them narrow-minded, judgmental, etc. Other times they will ridicule the very topics of the Bible such as baptism and the church. However, God's people must continue preaching and teaching the Word of God.

Conservatives And The Morally Upright:

There is another group of people today who are being mocked and ridiculed, though they are not members of the Lord's church. People who are outside the church, who nonetheless stand for the moral principles of our great country, are being ridiculed. Those who promote homosexuality and same-sex marriage mock those who oppose such perversion of God's Word. Jesus defined marriage as consisting of a man and a woman, a male and a female. The Bible states,

The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made *them* at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. (Mat.19:3-6)

Notice that God "made them male and female, and said, For this cause." The cause they are to be joined together is based upon their being male and female. He also said, What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. A grave warning is given to anyone who dares to alter God's Word, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Gal.1:8-9). Unfortunately, even the President of our country has made known he is in favor of same-sex marriages. While the man currently seated in the President's seat may be in favor of it, God is not. God has never and will never join male and male or female and female together as one.

Our brother Paul Sain recently penned the following pertinent words relative to this topic:

**HOMOSEXUALITY IS SPECIFICALLY
CONDEMNED IN THE WORD OF GOD!**

God has spoken (Heb. 1:1-2), to instruct and guide all mankind (2 Tim. 3:16-17), explicitly declaring what is sinful, inappropriate, regarding sexual activities between two men or between two women. Such action was declared an abomination in the Old Testament. Such action remains a violation of God's law under the New Law (New Testament). Please read again Paul's concise words found in Romans 1:26-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Timothy 1:9-10; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; as well as Jude 5-8; Leviticus 18:22; and Leviticus 20:13. Those who wish to throw restrictions and restraints out will attempt to destroy or explain away the above passages of Scripture. Yes, I suppose Eve thought and justified eating the forbidden fruit – but she was punished for her rebellion and disobedience. Today, any and all are given freedom to choose their own direction and way of life – but God has clearly stated the eternal consequences that await the one who rejects or disregards the “*way of righteousness*” (2 Peter 2:21).

**DOES THE BIBLE AUTHORIZE
OPPOSITION TO SINFUL SEXUAL
ACTIVITIES?**

Yes, absolutely God's people are instructed to oppose such ungodly actions.

The Bible addresses:

Incest.....Deut 27:20-23,30 Lev 18:6-18

Zoophilia.....Lev. 18:23; 20:15-16

Transvestism.....Deut. 22:5

Whoredom.....Ezek. 16:17

Sodomy.....Deut. 23:17

Homosexuality.....Lev. 18:22; 20:13;1 Cor.
6:9; Rom 1:20-32

Heterosexuality.....1 Cor. 7:2-5; Matt 19:3f

Those who are involved in such sins and/or promote them will mock those who stand against such sins. This writer does not believe the majority of the people in our country believe and practice these acts of immorality. It is time that the citizens of our country stand up and be counted, especially at elections, and be counted among those who oppose such things.

Faith That Endures and Overcomes Mockery

As long as light is light and darkness is darkness, there will never be any communion between the two. Paul wrote,

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my

sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.
(2 Cor. 6:14–18)

God's people realize they are not of the world. They also realize that since they are not of the world, the world will hate them. Jesus told His apostles,

If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me. (John 15:19–21)

How can Christians endure and overcome the ridicule hurled at them?

Faith In God

Although Job did not understand why all the things were happening to him, he endured. He poured out his complaint to God and God responded. Satan tried to get Job, but he could not have him. Job proved that God was still God no matter what! God's people today must believe God. The Hebrews' writer stated, "But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. We serve a God Who cares. God is not off in some remote part of heaven and unconcerned about what happens to His children. After Jesus warned His apostles of the opposition, He admonished,

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which

is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows. (Mat.10:28–31)

Just prior to Jesus being crucified, resurrected and ascending back to the Father, He exhorted His apostles, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also” (John 14:1–3).

Following The Example of Those Who Did Endure

Job was a man who endured and eventually overcame the ridicule of those who laughed (mocked). He is forever remembered as one who could endure. James admonished, “Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy” (Jam. 5:10–11). He was also held in high esteem by the faithful in the Old Testament. He is listed with such worthy Hebrews as Noah and Daniel. God through the prophet Ezekiel gave warning relative to people who departed from God. He wrote,

Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver *but* their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD ... *Though* these three men *were* in it, *as* I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters; they only shall be delivered, but the land shall be desolate ... Though these three men *were* in it, *as* I live, saith the Lord GOD, they

shall deliver neither sons nor daughters, but they only shall be delivered themselves. (Eze.14:14; Eze. 14:16; Eze. 14:18)

Neither Noah, Daniel, nor Job were sinlessly perfect (as all sin), yet they were great men of God.

The apostles are examples of enduring ridicule and mockery. Although the apostles were men who suffered ridicule due to the message they proclaimed, they continued to serve God faithfully. When faced with opposition, they had the attitude “we ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:30). The apostle Paul suffered greatly, yet he kept on keeping on (cf. 2 Cor. 11:1-33). How could they defeat a man like Paul? They could not! If they left him alone, he tried to convert the world. If they put him in jail, he converted the jailor. If they put him under house arrest, he wrote much of the New Testament. If they kill him, he was already in a strait betwixt the two, whether to depart and be with Christ which is far better, or to remain here to do more work.

The more one studies about the life and trials of Jesus Christ, the more he should be impressed with the courage and determination of Jesus Christ. How could Jesus remain so steadfast and committed in the face of opposition, suffering, and mockings? The Hebrews' writer tells us how. He wrote, “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2). Note carefully that Jesus despised the shame. Yet, He endured. Christians will despise the shame that oftentimes we face. Yet, we can endure. Jesus did!

Remember The Cause

To accomplish anything worthwhile, it usually takes endurance. While some things take inspiration (good thoughts), it takes much perspiration to get it accomplished. Men and women have given their lives for much lesser Causes than the Cause of Christ. The phrase *Remember the Alamo* stirs the hearts of people to remain steadfast in the face of opposition. We rejoice that the apostles did

not quit! What if when they were mocked and persecuted, they gave up the fight? Where would we be today with such negative examples? Rather than reading about John, Paul, and Peter and others giving up the faith, we read how they continued in spite of dungeon and death. Paul remembered the Cause for which he was fighting. He wrote, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

Remember The Consequence Of Quitting

After Jesus exhorted His apostles to “fear not” those who could kill their body but not their souls, He then stated, “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword” (Mat. 10:32–34). The Bible contains many references to those who gave up their faith in Him and did not endure. We are reminded of the Israelites who complained in the wilderness when things were tough. We are also reminded how they refused to take the promised land though God had delivered them from their captivity in Egypt and promised to be with them. They serve as warnings to us. God uses them as illustrations today for us not to give up lest we suffer the spiritual consequences of missing our promised land—heaven (cf. 1 Cor. 10, Book of Hebrews).

Remember The Reward

How did Jesus endure the shame of the cross?

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising

the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. (Heb. 12:1–3)

Earlier, the above verse was used to show that Jesus despised the shame. Emphasis is now given as to how He endured. He, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross. He could see beyond the cross knowing He was going to be seated at the right hand of God. Likewise, we must be able to see beyond the ridicule and opposition we face to the joy that is set before us. When Paul was in prison, he wrote letters encouraging others! When he was facing certain death, he did not recant. He remained faithful, knowing the certainty of his reward. He wrote,

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. (2 Tim. 4:6–8)

There is a reward for the faithful. Jesus said; “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). The Bible describes the wonderful city of God and promises each of us we can live with God forever, if we endure. Heaven will surely be worth all the ridicule and mockery we will face. There is a reward for faithfulness.

Conclusion

No, it is not funny when just men become the joke. The world may have its laugh, but it is temporary. There is a reward for the faithful. Paul admonished,

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day. (2 The. 1:7-10)

Job was a man who lost almost everything, but gained even more. We have seen the end of the Lord that He is very pitiful and of tender mercy (cf. Jam. 5:11). We rejoice that Jesus and His apostles did not give in nor give up. We have spiritual incentives for remaining faithful. Others also will learn from your example of steadfastness, if you endure. Let us remember the Cause, put on the whole armor of God, fight the good fight of faith, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.

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CHAPTER 30

Pure and Undeiled Religion: Meeting The Needs Of The Widows, The Fatherless, The Poor, And The Strangers

Andy Brewer

A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and he went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. (King James Version, Luke 10:30-35)

Who was the parable of the Good Samaritan really about? Often when it is preached or taught, a heavy emphasis is placed on

the righteous deeds of the one who showed mercy. However, the impression seems to be that this parable is not as much a celebration of his benevolent heart as much as it is an indictment of the stubborn, self-serving attitudes of the two unresponsive and uncaring men who had previously passed by. The Good Samaritan simply did what would be expected of any decent, humane individual. That is not to say that such an act should not be commended, but it should not necessarily be celebrated either. Man should not have to be celebrated for doing the right thing. It should be assumed. Children should not have to be rewarded for correct behavior. It should be expected. Neither should Christians expect public praise for practicing pure and undeified religion. It should come naturally.

“Pure religion and undeified before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (Jam. 1:27). Just prior to this familiar verse, James had spent some time discussing the implications of God’s Word being engrafted into our hearts (James 1:21). When that inspired Word is engrafted into our lives, it demands certain things making them natural attributes of a gospel-filled life. Among those natural reactions to the gospel is the display of pure religion mentioned in this timeless verse. This is not a suggestion. It is not a hint of a greater standard of living. This verse indicates an absolute necessity coded into our spiritual DNA—a part of who we become.

Hospitality Throughout the Bible

This, however, is not new. God has expected and demanded hospitality of His children throughout history. One of the earliest records of hospitality found in the Bible is in Genesis 18 when before Abraham

the Lord appeared...in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed

himself toward the ground. And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said. And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth. And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetcht a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hasted to dress it. And he took butter and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat. (Gen. 18:1-8)

In fact, Abraham's kind act was so righteous that Hebrews 13:2 points back to it and reminds modern man to "be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." There are additional examples of God's people showing mercy and kindness to others throughout the Old Testament and New Testament alike. God commanded Israel to leave the corners of their fields untouched when they harvested for the sake of the poor and the stranger (Lev. 19:9-10). Rahab is still remembered for her hospitality to the Jewish spies she entertained before Jericho fell (Jos. 6:17-27; Heb. 11:31). In Acts 4:32-37, Barnabas led a large number of early Christians in selling houses or portions of land and using the sum total of their proceeds in distributing basic needs to the poor. Listed among many different Christian responsibilities is the "distributing to the necessity of saints" and being "given to hospitality" (Rom. 12:13). Also mentioned among the numerous qualifications for elders in the Lord's church is the necessity of being

“a lover of hospitality” (Tit. 1:8). One Bible character, though, who excelled in this area but about whom little is typically said is Job.

A Rarely Stated Fact of Job’s Life

When the book of Job opens, this general description of Job is provided: “There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil” (Job 1:1). Most often when that description is read, foremost consideration is given to Job’s purity. He was a man who abstained from sin and promoted a similar righteousness among his children. He prayed for them and offered burnt sacrifices on their behalf (Job 1:5). Job was also well respected and revered among his peers. All of these attributes are part of his upright character, but also included would be his willingness to provide mercy and compassion toward those in need.

It is no secret that Job was financially blessed. Immediately after the marks of his character are mentioned, his substance is revealed as consisting of “seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east” (Job 1:3). Whatever Job did for a living, he did it well. But while money is sometimes a hindrance to a person’s willingness to show compassion (such as the rich man of Luke 16:19-31), Job used his success to submit humbly himself in service to others. Thus while Job’s generosity might not be a major theme discussed in this book chronicling his life, to him it did seem to be a personal commitment. In the three passages that discuss Job’s practice of pure and undeified religion, there are some prominent emphases with regard to how that generosity was administered.

Job’s Practice of Pure and Undeified Religion

These verses to which attention will now be given were written in the midst of Job’s response to his friends’ charge that his suffering was a result of his sinful ways, including his neglect of those less fortunate than he. Specifically, in Job 22:7-9, Eliphaz had charged:

Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink, and thou hast withholden bread from the hungry. But as for the mighty man, he had the earth; and the honorable man dwelt in it. Thou hast sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless have been broken.

This might have been this associate's perspective, but it was false to the core. Job immediately pointed out that some did blatantly and unscrupulously mistreat those in need using such tactics as included in the following verses:

- “They drive away the ass of the fatherless, they take the widow’s ox for a pledge” (Job 24:3).
- “They turn the needy out of the way: the poor of the earth hide themselves together” (Job 24:4).
- “They pluck the fatherless from the breast, and take a pledge of the poor” (Job 24:9).
- “They cause him to go naked without clothing, and they take away the sheaf from the hungry” (Job 24:10).

Yet while such blatant mistreatment did occur Job boldly claimed his innocence of such ruthless and inconsiderate activities. In fact, in the first passage to which attention will be given, Job said:

When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was

a father to the poor: and the cause which I knew
not I searched out. (Job 29:11-16)

Now lest the false charges of arrogance and pride be leveled against him, remember that the bulk of Job's words recorded in this book were his personal defense against ruthless, vicious, and untrue charges. Such was the case with these words. He was not talking about himself in such a manner simply to be praised of men. He was talking about himself in such a manner to maintain his innocence. He was being attacked, and he merely wanted to defend himself. His defense was simple. Job wanted his record to speak for itself.

In his words, never did he see a man or woman legitimately poor and helpless that he did not seek to help to the best of his ability. In fact, not only did he say that he sought to minimize the sorrow in the lives of these people, but he also actively sought to fill them with joy. That additional gesture requires a great amount of commitment and effort. But what a difference it can make in a life! Job said that he "caused the widow's heart to sing for joy" (Job 29:13). Now it is not recorded exactly what tactics were used to accomplish such a feat of mercy, but it can be assured that it was not a quick and simple task. It would have required significant time and energy. Not only did he try to comfort the fatherless, he did what he could to provide those fatherly characteristics himself and become "a father to the poor" (Job 29:16). Handing them money can help a poor orphaned child, but how much more are they helped by being provided a mentor? It is the "give a man a fish and he will eat for a day, teach a man to fish and he will eat for a lifetime" principle. By attempting to restore these people's lives to what they had previously enjoyed, they would become empowered to press onward independently. That was what Job sought to do. He did not just want to give a handout. He wanted to empower those in need to reestablish themselves to their former joy.

Is this not a practical pattern for the manner by which modern man may and must render benevolent aid? Benevolence must not be viewed as nothing more than giving a handout. Neither should

benevolence be accepted as nothing more than a handout. In Thessalonica during the first century A.D., there were some who because of their assumption that Christ's return was imminent quit their jobs and were content to live off the fruitful efforts of others. Paul's reaction was to tell the church that when they were confronted by such people that "if any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 The. 3:10). His simple point was that while the church should be active in helping those legitimately in need that it should not be subjected to issuing nothing more than handouts to men or women who while able bodied are unwilling to work. Benevolence should be used as an opportunity to help someone help himself. That is how it was administered throughout the Bible and is how it should be administered today.

Benevolence is Not Just About Money

A point mentioned in the previous passage but magnified in the next is the fact that practicing benevolence does not demand an exchange of money or material goods. Job previously mentioned his efforts in reestablishing joy among widows and included with that he asks the question: "Did not I weep for him that was trouble? Was not my soul grieved for the poor?" (Job 30:25). There are many times when the greatest need those troubled have has nothing to do with hunger, thirst, clothing, shelter, or any other physical need. Sometimes the only thing needed is a sympathetic ear, a shoulder on which to cry, or an encouraging pat on the back. Paul would similarly write that Christians should generally be those that "rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep" (Rom. 12:15). Such sorrow is something common to all. It is an emotion that all men have faced or one day will face. Solomon reminds that in everyone's life there is "a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance" (Ecc. 3:4). The principle of the Golden Rule (Mat. 7:12) would dictate that just as we would appreciate a reciprocation of sorrow, we should display the same toward others. That is how a family works. When those connected together by common blood experience pain, they all experience pain. That natural affection binds them together in such a way that they all feel sorrow. How much greater

is the bond experienced by those connected by the blood of Jesus? It is that blood that makes us family together. In that bond is the reciprocation of emotion.

As Jesus made His way down the Via Dolorosa (“the way of grief” or “way of suffering”) following the conclusion of His unjust trial and cruel scourging “there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented Him” (Luke 23:27). Seeing their great torment and being full of trouble, Jesus wanted to ease their sorrow and uttered these words: “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children” (Luke 23:28). Yes, coupled with the verses to follow, Jesus was issuing words of warning, but He was also offering words of comfort to ease their pain.

What a needed area of ministry in a world so torn and stricken by pain and anguish. People who are in and of this world have a need that nothing in this world can satisfy. Man has an eternal thirst for hope that can only be quenched by the comfort provided in God’s Word. This was the very essence of Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well to whom He said, “But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14). What joy to know that in Jesus we are able to partake of living water, water that quenches the eternal thirst of the soul! Water so satisfying that by drinking it we are able to lie in wait of that eternal city where there will be “no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Rev. 21:4). Paul wanted to comfort those Thessalonian Christians confused about the resurrection with this encouraging fact so he reminded them that

if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent

them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. (1 The. 4:14-18)

Could anyone possibly argue that these words of comfort recorded by Jesus, John, and Paul were anything but an act of benevolence? So often Christians either individually or collectively bemoan their inability to be more benevolent because of financial restrictions not knowing that many times the most benevolent thing they can do is to offer words of comfort and eternal hope.

From Job a lesson in true benevolence is learned not just because of his great material wealth but also because of his spiritual and emotional concern for others. He wept for those that wept. He hurt with those that hurt. He sought to restore joy to those found joyless. This is a work in which all can be actively engaged!

Benevolence As A Matter Of The Conscience

It is important to not just know how benevolence can and must be administered. Job has issued an example in that area already. But he also issues a directive that benevolence must be a duty so closely intertwined into our lives that we feel empty without it and offended at an accusation of neglect. That was Job's reaction in this final passage chronicling his giving spirit. Remember again Eliphaz's accusatory remarks of Job 22:7-9 in which he suggested that Job's suffering was a result in part of his begrudging ignorance of the plight of others. Not only did Job rebut that with evidence of his benevolent activities but now Job's offence at such an inclination is made obvious:

If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or
have caused the eyes of the widow to fail; or have

eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof; (for from my youth he was brought up with me, as with a father, and I have guided her from my mother's womb;) if I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering; if his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep; if I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless, when I saw my help in the gate: then let mine arm fall from my shoulder blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone. (Job 31:16-22)

Job's general attitude seemed to be aghast that anyone, particularly an assumed friend, would suggest that he did not care nor provide care for those in need. In fact, not only was Job willing to stake his reputation (which he likely cared little about) on his benevolent spirit, but he was also willing to stake his life on it, wishing physical anguish on himself if it proved to not be so. His offence was not simply with regard to his efforts, but he also points out that any indictment of his treatment of others was an indictment of his parents who he said admonished him to be so benevolent. (Job 31:18)

Indicated, too, from this is that benevolence is a duty in which we will be most successful if we are taught (Pro. 22:6). How many parents have shown disappointment in the self-serving nature of their children only to be blinded to their influence in the same? Job knew to have compassion on others because he had been taught to have compassion on others. It was an activity displayed before him in his very home from his childhood. The fatherless were his companions and his dinner guests. He knew nothing but to be helpful to others of such nature. How dare it be suggested that he who was reared by benevolent parents to be a benevolent man did not care about the downtrodden all around him! Some would not care if such a charge were leveled against them because they could not deny it. But with

those who scrupulously engage in benevolence as a conscientious obligation, it stirs anger because it simply is not so.

In fact, Job was so scrupulously involved in benevolence that he viewed neglect as blatant mistreatment. To not provide food to the hungry or drink to the thirsty would equate to raising his fist in violence against them. If he did not provide clothing to those that were cold, he compared it with throwing them out in sub-freezing weather. Job believed to not be proactive in service was to be actively oppressing those in need without any middle ground in which to bask. A pure man views pure religion as a way of life, a standard, an absolute. Such was Job and so, too, should we be.

Pure Religion In View Of The Judgment

Is this topic really that important? Must benevolence really be emphasized that much in our lives? It would be of interest to walk up to the average person in any church in America and ask them this fundamental question: “Is it necessary for religion to be pure and undefiled in order to be saved?” Surely there would not be a single sincere person who would claim a belief that their religion could justifiably be impure and defiled. But when God’s definition of pure and undefiled religion is revealed, then its importance in view of eternity becomes blatantly clear.

However, one must not necessarily lay out the logical arguments in such manner to arrive at this obvious point. Jesus made it abundantly clear in Matthew 25. In that familiar chapter, Jesus pictured the great judgment scene at which time He would set the sheep to the right and the goats to the left.

Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I

was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? Or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. (Mat. 25:34-40)

While these acts of benevolence were not arbitrary legalistic works allowing the otherwise unrighteous to earn their salvation, Jesus does depict them as a requirement of the righteous heart. Redemption is made available only by contacting the blood of Jesus in obedience, but total submission to His will includes the duties outlined in the passage above. But unto those on the left, Jesus had a completely different eternal picture to paint:

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. (Mat. 25:41-45)

Job knew thousands of years before that his willingness to practice religion pure and undefiled was a matter of his soul's salvation. But not only did he know it, he was committed to it. He made it a matter of his conscience. And with it he provided a lasting example for all mankind to come—not just in approaching personal suffering with grace but in helping others to ease their suffering as well. May this be the charge of each child of God as it was the charge of His servant Job.

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CHAPTER 31

My Servant Job Will Pray For You: For Him Will I Accept

Justin Paschal

When you think of great men of prayer in the Bible, of whom do you think? Maybe you think of Noah, one who survived the flood because of his faithfulness to God. Maybe you think of Abraham, a man who left his country and traveled to a land not yet known to him. Or maybe you prefer Moses. Without question, Moses was a man of prayer. How else could one endure all that he did without relying on the Almighty? Then there is the Apostle Paul. Paul spoke often about the power and importance of prayer. And we could continue to notice example after example of individuals that were models when it came to the subject of prayer. But one name that might not make our list is that of Job.

Job was a man of prayer. And while we may not put him on our list, God placed Job on His. The book of Job begins with Job interceding on behalf of his children by offering sacrifices for them. “So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings *according to* the number of them all. For Job said, ‘It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.’ Thus Job did regularly” (New King James Version, Job 1:5). We know that these sacrifices would have included prayer.

Also, the book of Job closes with reference to prayer with our text under consideration:

And so it was, after the Lord had spoken these words to Job, that the Lord said to Eliphaz the

Temanite, “My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me *what is* right, as My servant Job *has*. Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you. For I will accept him, lest I deal with you *according to your* folly; because you have not spoken of Me *what is* right, as My servant Job *has*.” So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite *and* Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the Lord commanded them; for the Lord had accepted Job. And the Lord restored Job’s losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. (Job 42:7-10)

God instructs Job’s three friends to go to Job, and he will pray for them. What a blessing and an honor for Job that God could state with confidence that He would accept the prayer of Job on behalf of them. “Zophar, Eliphaz, and Bildad will come to ‘sinful’ Job and ask for his prayers on their behalf. The irony is so thick you can feel it as you read God’s request. Now Job would become what he sought, a mediator between God and man” (Whitacre 292).

Many, especially preachers, have probably found themselves in similar positions. You are at the bank and the teller recognizes you and asks for you to pray for a family member that is ill. While at the church building, the phone rings and on the other end is a desperate voice asking for prayers for a difficulty they are facing. Christians find themselves in the position of Job sometimes when asked to pray for others. And what a blessing and honor it should be to have individuals who place such confidence in us that they ask us to petition God for them.

Such was the confidence that God placed in Job, but this raises several questions concerning Job, his friends, and ourselves. Why

was Job in a position to pray for his friends? Why were Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar not able to acceptably pray on behalf of each other? What things do we need to be doing to insure that God can say the same for us as He did for Job? Let us notice three main things concerning Job and prayer.

The Reasons For Job's Acceptable Prayer

There are numerous reasons why Job's prayer would be acceptable. Some of those reasons revolve around Job, and some of those reasons revolve around his three friends. We begin by noticing three things about Job that made his prayer acceptable.

Job's Character

God told Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar to go to Job and ask him to pray for them because of his character. The character of Job is on exhibit throughout the book. From beginning to end, we see the nature of Job as one who is excellent in spirit and unwavering in faith. In fact, you do not even have to go but to the first verse in this great book to see Job's character on display. "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name *was* Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil" (Job 1:1).

Job was "blameless." In our world today there are very few who could carry such a lofty description. Some are blameless today due to an ability to avoid detection, but Job conducted his life in such a way as to not incur blame by not doing wrong.

Job was described as "upright." This is obviously not a depiction of a physical position, but it is a description of a spiritual condition. Job conducted his life in such a way that he could be right in the eyes of God. Such is seen in God's recommendation of Job. "Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that *there is* none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?" (Job 1:8).

Job is also described as one who "fears God." We understand that this word refers to a reverence that Job had towards God. Job did not view God as a dictator and fear Him as such, but Job viewed God as a Father and respected Him as such.

Finally Job is described as one who “shunned evil.” In a world where people try to get as “close to the fire without getting burned,” this character trait of Job is important. Job avoided situations and areas where evil prevailed and as a result avoided any charges of wrong due to guilt by association.

If the first verse were all we knew of the character of Job that would be enough, but as we continue to read throughout the book so many other things come to light. Job offered sacrifices for his family. He was in that respect (and I am sure other areas) a good father. Job took care of those in need. He was faithful to his wife. “I have made a covenant with my eyes; Why then should I look upon a young woman?” (Job 31:1).

In reference to the character of Job mentioned in Job 1:1, Franklin Camp observed the following:

Therefore he was a man that was a believer in God, feared God and has reverence for God. He was a man that was righteous—the word “*perfect*” does not mean sinless, but it has to do with his righteousness, as indicated in the sacrifices that he offered and the fact that he acted as a priest for his family (1:5). All of this has to do with the matter of him being one that was righteous. (14)

When you look at the character of Job, it is no wonder that his prayer was one that God would accept.

Job's Conviction

A second reason that Job's prayer was acceptable to God was because of Job's conviction. And with this idea of conviction, two things come to mind.

First, Job remained committed to God despite all the things that were happening to him. Job lost all his possessions and his family, save his wife, in one day! Can you imagine? Do you even want to imagine? Such losses would shake the faith of many, but not Job.

“Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said: ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, And naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord.’ In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong” (Job 1:20-22). Job’s conviction remained strong.

In chapter 2, Job’s health is stripped from him, and his wife instructs him to “Curse God and die!” (Job 2:9), but even in this Job still remained faithful to God. “But he said to her, ‘You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?’ In all this Job did not sin with his lips” (Job 2:10). Despite all that he suffered, Job’s conviction in God remained strong.

Second, Job was convicted of his place in the order of things and came to love God even more.

Then Job answered the Lord and said: “I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of *Yours* can be withheld from You. *You asked*, ‘Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?’ Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Listen, please, and let me speak; *You said*, ‘I will question you, and you shall answer Me.’ “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor *myself*, And repent in dust and ashes.” (Job 42:1-6)

It is after this repentance and confession that God makes His affirmation concerning Job and his prayer. This writer does not believe that the order is an accident. It is Job being convicted of his wrong understanding of God that places him in a position to help his three friends. Four times in verses 7-8, God refers to Job as “My servant” because Job had done what was right.

Job's Care

The final thing we want to notice concerning Job is his care. Job cared for people. Numerous verses throughout the book point to the good that Job did for others. "Because I delivered the poor who cried out, The fatherless and *the one who* had no helper" (Job 29:12). "I *was* eyes to the blind, And I *was* feet to the lame. I *was* a father to the poor, And I searched out the case *that* I did not know" (Job 29:15-16).

Even more revealing is Job's attitude towards Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. These three men had done nothing short of a full-out character assassination on Job. The world would tell us, let them pray for themselves and best of luck. The world would shout, "I told you so!" But Job was not like the world. He cared about the souls of these three men just as he did for others. "So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite *and* Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the Lord commanded them; for the Lord had accepted Job" (Job 42:9).

It was not until after Job offered prayer and sacrifice for these men that he was rewarded. This leads one to wonder if maybe this was Satan's last big attempt on Job to get him to neglect these three men who had treated him so poorly. But he passed this test as he had all the others. His care for others is one of the reasons for his prayer being acceptable.

The Rejection Of Job's Friends' Prayers

The reason for Job's acceptable prayer was not just because of Job, but also because of the need of his three friends. If they had been acceptable in the eyes of God, then there would have been no reason for Job to pray for them. These three men did a number of things wrong. For brevity, we will only notice three.

Their Dishonesty

To begin, Job's friends accused him of all sorts of unrighteousness. Of course, all of this was based upon their supposition that only the evil suffer. But these men knew Job. They knew he was an upright man. They knew his character, conviction, and care for others. But they were dishonest with themselves and Job in accusing him

of wrong doing. Bildad said, “Behold, God will not cast away the blameless, Nor will He uphold the evildoers” (Job 8:20). Zophar chimed in, “For he has oppressed *and* forsaken the poor, He has violently seized a house which he did not build” (Job 20:19). And not to be left out, Eliphaz said, “Is not your wickedness great, And your iniquity without end?” (Job 22:5).

“If Job were a sinner, these allegations would have been justified, but they had no proof. They were dishonest in their accusations. As is friends. They knew of his integrity” (Whitacre 290).

Their Deduction

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar took it upon themselves to speak for God. They had deduced that Job suffered because of evil and their deduction was wrong! “They spoke authoritatively during a time of limited revelation. Instead of asking questions to God as Job did, they acted as His spokesperson” (Whitacre 290). “But oh, that God would speak, And open His lips against you, That He would show you the secrets of wisdom! For *they would* double *your* prudence. Know therefore that God exacts from you *Less* than your iniquity *deserves*” (Job 11:5-6).

We can be guilty of the same today. If we do not have a “Thus says the Lord,” it may be better to keep our mouths shut. Job’s three friends were guilty because they spoke for God not even knowing what God would say!

Their Deficiency

The point here is that they were deficient concerning one of the jobs of a friend. Job was in misery and in need of comfort, and they provided none.

They were miserable comforters in a time when Job needed true friendship. Early in the dialogue Job said, “To Him that is afflicted, pity should be shewed from his friend; but he forsaketh the fear of the Almighty” (6:14). After several dialogues Job was forced to say, “I have heard many such things: miserable comforters are ye all” (16:2).

With friends like this, who needs enemies!
(Whitacre 291)

Job was in need of comfort, and he received chiding. He needed encouragement, and he received an indictment. He needed a shoulder upon which to lean, and he received a kick in the gut. He needed understanding, but the critique he received was completely unforgiving. “How then can you comfort me with empty words, Since falsehood remains in your answers?” (Job 21:34).

The writer realizes that the “Golden Rule” had not yet been stated by our Lord. “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Mat. 7:12). But surely some form of that principle should have been in effect. If the roles had been reversed, surely Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar would have looked to Job for a lift in this time of despair. But Job found no such lift from them. The third reason they were wrong was in their deficiency in comforting their friend.

The Results Of Job’s Acceptable Prayer

We have noticed the reasons for Job’s acceptable prayer, but now we focus our attention on the results of that prayer. Prayer works! Prayer is powerful! If we truly believe those statements, then we expect some things to happen as a result of that prayer. There are three things that we want to notice that occurred as a result of Job’s prayer to Almighty God.

The Friends Are Restored

“So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite *and* Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the Lord commanded them; for the Lord had accepted Job” (Job 42:9). While the text does not state, “And Job’s three friends were forgiven,” the text does state that Job’s prayer was accepted, and since he was praying for their forgiveness, they were forgiven.

Of all the results of Job’s prayer, this one is the most important. These three men had not been not in a right relationship with God, but because of the prayer and sacrifices that were offered,

they now were. The words of James come to mind, “Confess *your* trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (Jam. 5:16). Job’s prayer availed much, and as a result his friends were restored.

Job Is Renewed

While this is not stated explicitly in the text, I believe there is the implication that a renewal of the friendship that Job had with his three friends takes place here. As you come to Job 42:10, the text states, “And the Lord restored Job’s losses **when** he prayed for his friends” (emp. added—JP). For Job to pray for their forgiveness and for God to restore his previous station in life, we can logically conclude that Job forgave his friends.

Forgiveness would mean that Job would put these things in the past. It would not be brought up in conversation between one another, gossiped about to others, or replayed in Job’s mind. They were forgiven, and as a result that friendship could now be renewed.

Job Is Rewarded

The final result of Job’s prayer is that Job was rewarded. The text outlines the rewarding of Job as follows:

And the Lord restored Job’s losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. Then all his brothers, all his sisters, and all those who had been his acquaintances before, came to him and ate food with him in his house; and they consoled him and comforted him for all the adversity that the Lord had brought upon him. Each one gave him a piece of silver and each a ring of gold. Now the Lord blessed the latter *days* of Job more than his beginning; for he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand female donkeys. He also had seven sons and three daughters. And he called

the name of the first Jemimah, the name of the second Keziah, and the name of the third Keren-Happuch. In all the land were found no women so beautiful as the daughters of Job; and their father gave them an inheritance among their brothers. After this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children and grandchildren *for* four generations. So Job died, old and full of days. (Job 42:10-17)

When we think about the rewarding of Job in the end, we should consider the words of James, “Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end *intended* by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful” (Jam. 5:11).

Because of Job’s acceptable prayer, His friends were restored, their friendship was renewed, and Job was rewarded.

The Requirements For Our Acceptable Prayer

In the space that remains, we want to turn our attention inward because we want to be in a position like Job where we can offer prayer on behalf of others. And just as we noticed three reasons for Job’s prayer being acceptable to God, we want to notice those same three things concerning ourselves and our prayers.

What Are Some Things That Should Characterize Our Prayers?

First, we should pray **believingly**. “But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Heb. 11:6). “But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind” (Jam. 1:6). When we pray to God, we should believe that He hears and that He will answer.

Second, we should pray **submissively**. “You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures” (Jam. 4:3). When we pray we must submit our will to the

will of God. We need to have the attitude of our Lord, “Your will be done” (Mat. 6:10).

Third, we should pray **fervently**. Prayer is not something that should be done halfheartedly. James talks about fervent prayer (Jam. 5:16). Would anyone deny that our Lord prayed fervently in the garden? Of course not! We should pray fervently.

Fourth, we should pray **humbly**. The best example of having humility in prayer was given by our Lord as follows:

Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. (Luke 18:9-14)

We must be humble in all aspects of life, and that includes when we pray.

Fifth, we should pray **habitually**. Daniel was one who had a regular prayer life. “Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, **as was his custom** since early days” (Dan. 6:10, emp. added, JP). Paul would tell the

Thessalonians to “[p]ray without ceasing” (1 The. 5:17) which would indicate a regular prayer life.

Sixth, we should pray **gratefully**. There are a multitude of verses that talk about expressing thankfulness in our prayers. “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God” (Phi. 4:6). When we pray to our Father, let us make sure to thank Him for everything He does!

Seventh, we should pray **reverently**. Our attitude in prayer to God should never be flippant. God deserves our respect, and He should be addressed in that manner. Jesus the Master Teacher taught us to address the Father properly. “In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name” (Mat. 6:9).

Eighth, we are to pray **to the Father**. Jesus always addressed his prayers to the Father. The model prayer was addressed to the Father. The recorded prayers of the Apostles were addressed to the Father. We do not have any examples in our New Testament of prayers being addressed to anyone else.

Ninth, we are to pray **through the Son**. The fact that Jesus is our mediator is taught throughout the New Testament. “For *there is* one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the* Man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). “For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father” (Eph. 2:18). “And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (John 14:13).

Having these nine characteristics will go a long way in assuring that our prayers are acceptable to God.

Are We Convicted Of The Power Of Prayer?

This writer is convinced that one of the reasons that Christians do not pray as they should is because they do not truly believe in the power of prayer. Prayer is so much more than simply a conversation with God. Prayer shows our dependence on God. It shows our love for God. Prayer helps us to recognize our position in relation to God. It gives us strength to resist the Devil. Prayer provides us with comfort in times of distress. It gives us access to God’s blessings and gives an avenue to the Christian to access the cleansing blood of

Christ. Prayer works, and as Christians we need to be convicted of the power of prayer.

Do We Care Enough To Pray For Others?

When we are asked by someone to pray for them, do we just go through the motions or are we praying a truly heartfelt prayer? It is this writer's fear that sometimes we just go through the motions in order to say, "We prayed for you." It is not the half-hearted prayer that James says avails much. When we are asked to pray for someone, let us take that responsibility seriously. And pray to God with the same earnest that we would use for our self or our own family.

Conclusion

The story of Job is one of tragedy but also one of triumph. While Job may have had some misunderstanding about God, he understood more about the Father in the end. While his friends rebuked him in the beginning, they came to him for forgiveness in the end. Job was a man who could offer an acceptable prayer for others because of the man that he had become. We, as Christians, need to do the same.

We need to live our lives in such a way that God can say, "My servant _____ shall pray for you. For I will accept him." Can you place your name in the blank?

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CHAPTER 32

Thoroughly Weighing Grief: Learning Not To Make Light Of People's Problems

Tom Holland

There are scholars who date the book of Job in the early part of time. Keil and Delitzsch assert: "Perhaps as a work by its patriarchal contents referring back to the earliest times ("Introduction"). If that date is accurate, then in early human history grief has challenged both the mind and heart of people who faced the hurts and the disappointments of life.

Job experienced the worst kind of suffering. He was thrown three strikes in life: one, the loss of his wealth; two, the loss of his children; and three, the loss of his health.

One can almost empathize with Job when he exclaimed: "O that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together" (King James Version, Job 6:2).

The word Job used for grief means "to be under any turbulent, uneasy commotion of mind" (Wilson "Grief"). The English word *grief* identifies "deep sadness or mental distress caused by a loss, remorse, or bereavement" (Webster "Grief").

How does one effectively communicate grief? There is an old spiritual which says, "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen. Nobody knows my sorrow." In trying to comfort someone who is going through an ordeal we have not personally experienced, we may sincerely say, "I know how you feel." But do we really know? Job said that his grief would be "heavier than the sand of the sea"

(Job 6:3). Since grief is a mental and emotional burden, we can only communicate grief by comparison. How do you communicate grief; how would grief be quantified? Job compared his grief to the sand of the sea.

In this study of grief, the focus will be on three things: reasons we—like Job—grieve; responses to grief; and effectively coping with grief. The view of grief in this presentation will be that of the Scriptures and not that of worldly psychology. Psychologists may help us cope with grief, but God and His Word may heal our troubled minds and hearts.

Reasons For Grief

One word can summarize the reason for Job's grief and ours: *loss*. Job lost precious things, priceless things, children, and his health. Children are "an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward." (Psa. 127:3). Health gives strength for worthwhile accomplishments adding meaning and purpose for our existence. Job lost all of these important things.

What was the cause of all of Job's loss? What, therefore, was the reason for Job's grief? Who had "shot him with poison arrows?" What "had set themselves in array against" him? Job's explanation was "the terrors of God" (Job 6:4).

How many times today does God get the blame for something that someone loses: A person may cry out: "Why did God do this to me?" Or, "Well God took him/her" referring to the death of a child, a spouse, a parent, or a friend.

What is the implication in those kinds of observations? God is omnipotent; He controls the universe, so He could have prevented death from taking a loved one.

An old argument of atheism was constructed in the following manner: is God unlimited in His attributes? Is He all-loving? Is He omnipotent? Christians answer "Yes, God is unlimited in these attributes." The atheist then replies: "If God is all-powerful and all-loving, why does evil exist? We know that evil exists, therefore we know there is no God."

I do not know why this argument no longer seems to be used by atheists. Did they realize that without a good and gracious God as the means of identifying evil, how do we know that there is such a thing as “evil”?

Was God responsible for Job’s grief? Only, I suppose, in the sense that God permitted it. Actually the Devil was the one responsible for Job’s grief. Who in the dawn of time brought separation from God? Who brought sin, suffering, and death upon the human family?

The Holy Spirit clearly and emphatically identified the one who is responsible for our loss and, therefore, our grief. “Be sober, be watchful: for your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom withstand steadfast in your faith, knowing that the same sufferings are accomplished in your brethren who are in the world” (American Standard Version, 1 Pet. 5:8-9).

As long as we are in the world that Satan, our adversary, has corrupted and defiled, that long we will be exposed to potential hurts, sorrows, disappointments, and pain.

Reactions To Grief

Some people seem unable to handle the heavy burden of grief so they terminate their earthly life. We know people who have been unable to handle the grief of a broken marriage, the death of a child, or even a drastic financial loss.

Some grieving people seem to withdraw from society. They become a type of hermit. In extreme cases, they become homeless. Some withdraw to a home or an apartment and seem to cut off interaction with other people. They may have concluded that because someone rejected them, then nobody cares for them. They may, in their grief, feel like the Psalmist who declared, “For there is no man that knoweth me; Refuge hath failed me; No man careth for my soul” (ASV, Psa. 142:4).

However, someone cares. God cares. God’s people of compassion care. God’s people may seem not to care because

they do not know the loneliness or the grief that someone may be enduring. Or God's people may forget that grief is not buried in a cemetery.

Job seemed to get down on himself. He asks some rhetorical questions: Do animals react with sounds of hunger when they have plenty of eat? Is food without salt good to the taste? Is the white of an egg pleasing to the taste? Job said, "The things that my soul refused to touch are as my sorrowful meat" (Job 6:7).

What is without salt one does not relish, and there is no flavor in...the white of an egg...Thus it is with his sufferings. Those things which he before inwardly detested...are now as loathsome food which he must eat. (Keil and Delitzsch, "Job 6:5-7")

Job eventually came to the right reaction. He said, "He knoweth the way I take: when he hath tried me I shall come forth as gold. My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept and not declined" (Job 23:10-11).

Grief makes us either better or bitter. We may not be able to control the things that grieve us, but we can, with God's help, control our reaction to those things which bring us grief. God did not answer Paul's prayer for the removal of a "thorn in the flesh." But God did provide sufficient grace, so in Paul's weakness, he found strength (2 Cor. 12:1-6). Shakespeare observed:

Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous
Wears yet a priceless jewel in its head.
And this our life, exempt from public haunt,
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running
 brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.
(II.i 12-17)

How to Handle Grief

The time of grief is the time to reach up to God. A friend of mine who was going through a difficult time in life was told by the late Franklin Camp, “Get into the book of Psalms.” My friend went to help a mutual friend whose son had been killed and he told our friend, “Get into the book of Psalms.” Who has not been comforted by Psalm 23?

Grief is a time to go to a caring God in prayer. Prayer is a means of casting care, anxiety, sorry and grief upon a God who cares for His children (1 Pet. 5:7). We should never forget, “He cares for you.”

God’s Word assures us that God will never leave or forsake us (Heb.13:5-6). So we sing:

Be not dismayed whate’r betide. God will take care of you;
Beneath His wings of love abide, God will take care of you.
God will take care of you, Thro’ every day, O’er all the way;
He will take care of you, God will take care of you. (Martin)

Grief is a time to reach out to others. The Holy Spirit, in urging God’s people not to faint or lose heart in well doing said, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us go good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10).

It may seem ironic, but grief that cares is grief that is shared. If you want to cope with your hurts, then reach out to help someone who is hurting. If you need strength to bear the burden of grief, then reach out to comfort someone who is grieving.

The psychiatrist, the author of the book, *Whatever Became of Sin*, was once asked, “What would you do if you thought that you were losing your mind?” He said, “I would immediately go across the tracks and try to help someone” (Menninger).

The people where I preach know that their pain is my hurt, their grief is my sorrow, and their happiness is my joy.

What did Paul do while in a Roman prison? He became an instrument in the hands of the Holy Spirit to write some of the vital books of the New Testament.

In the application of the theme of Hebrews that Jesus Christ is worthy of our faith, the inspired writer exhorted: "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." (Heb. 13:16).

The third place to look in dealing with grief is within our own hearts and lives. The devil "smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown" (Job 2:7). His wife said, "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God and die" (Job 2:9). Job said that his wife spoke as a foolish woman. He said, "Shall we not receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10). Although Job evidently thought the evil that had come upon him had come from the "hand of God," Job did not forget the good days that God had given.

Do we ever say when we are enjoying good days, "Why me?" Or, "What have I done to deserve all these blessings?"

Where was the apostle Paul when he wrote the New Testament epistle of joy, when he would write, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, Rejoice"? He was in prison! (Phi. 4:4).

Do you recall the lines, "Two men looked through prison bars. One saw mud, the other saw stars"?

In times of grief, we need to do what we sometimes sing, "Count your many blessings and it will surprise you what the Lord has done" (Oatman).

We need to remember the source of the pain, hurt, and death we sometimes experience. The real source, as in Job's case, is our adversary, the devil.

God will take care of the situation in His way and according to His time. The devil will be cast "into the bottomless pit." God's children will be gloriously ushered into the land that is fairer than day where God will wipe all tears away, where pain, sorrow and death shall have flown away: eternal victory over all grief, sorrow, sin, pain, and death.

Heaven is as real as the grief we bear. The joys of heaven will be more abundant than the deepest sorrow we may have known. One

moment of the delight of heaven will surpass all the days of grief we have had to endure on this devil-cursed earth.

Let us not lose sight of heaven even if we have to look at it through our tears. Let us “set our mind” on things above and not on the things of this earth (Col. 3:1-4).

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CHAPTER 33

Ye Have Heard Of The Patience Of Job

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

Year by year, it continues to be a deep delight and high honor to speak on this good, great, and grand lectureship and pen a chapter for the valiant volume produced here each summer. My thanks to Wade, the elders, and the entire Southaven congregation for the appreciated invitation to appear on the one for 2012. Wade does a masterful job in crafting an outstanding program. Past ones on David, Moses, Peter, and the Prodigal Son have been magnificent and marvelous. The current one on Job will take its place as literary peer to the previous ones.

Though Job is an Old Testament Book, my assigned text is lifted from the New Testament and yet is about this patient patriarch of old. The precious passage reads,

Behold, we count them happy which endure.
Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have
seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very
pitiful, and of tender mercy. (King James Version,
Jam. 5:11)

Of the eight penmen of the New Testament, James is the only writer to mention Job and he does it only once.

Old Testament Personalities Mentioned By James

He and the Spirit of truth, who inspired him, knew the vast value of examples. In James 2, we read about Abraham and Rahab. Both

of them exemplified eloquently works of obedience. Each had faith that worked (Jam. 2:23-26). In James 5 we read about Job and Elijah (Jam. 5:11; Jam. 5:17-18). Job was a sterling example of patience while bold Elijah was an amazing example of availing prayer. By his prayer, he moved the Hand of Him that moves the Universe and controls the falling of moisture to earth. From Job 42, we learn that Job was a man of availing prayer. The three men who had spoken incorrectly of Jehovah and Job—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar—found that to be the case.

Remote And Immediate Context Of James 5:11

The focus of James 5:11 is Job and his patience. Job is an Old Testament personality. He is mentioned by name in the book that bears his name, in Ezekiel 14:14, 20 and here in James 5:11.

The remote context would be the book of Job and the two references in Ezekiel 14. He was a great man in Uz with a large family and possessions many. He was great in character and conduct, in language and life, and in motive and mission. God was well pleased with his servant on earth. Satan was an adversary claiming Job's faith in God was due to God's blessing him so profusely. Satan is allowed to take away his possessions and even his children—all ten of them. Job 2 witnesses the total loss of his good health. Satan boasted that Job would curse God when deprived of all this. He did not. His wife turned against him. His three so-called friends turned with venom on the tried patriarch. These three operated on a fallacious foundation. They associated his sufferings with great sin on his part. His suffering was great; therefore his sins must have been grave and serious, according to them.

He is vindicated fully in Job 42 with the doubling of his possessions and ten children again—seven sons and three daughters. There were some dips in his faith and patience, but God was still his God. His faith and patience never forsook him in the darkest days and weary nights he faced in loneliness and indescribable discomfort.

In the Ezekiel references, he is teamed with great nobles of the Old Testament—Noah and Daniel. So sinful had God's people become that even if these three, Noah, Job, and Daniel, lived in the

land, they would be able only to deliver their own souls by the royal righteousness of their dedicated lives.

The immediate context is the passage preceding James 5:11 and the succeeding verses. Patience and the Lord's help are the keynotes of James 5:11. However, patience is mentioned in James 5:7-8. James inculcates its essentiality in the lives of the brethren to whom he wrote. In verse 10, he wrote of the suffering, afflictions, and patience of past prophets. Then in verse 11, he singles out and names Job and his marvelous manifestation of patience. In the succeeding verses, he counseled them about speech patterns, praying when afflicted, singing when happy, what to do when sick, the need to confess faults, Elijah's availing prayer for no rain and then rain, and winning back those who have departed from the faith and need restoration.

The remote and immediate context of James 5:11 make this verse all that much more important. The Spirit and James never intended that we pass over this verse with little or no heed attached to it. It is a valiant and vital verse of Sacred Scripture.

Patience: A Key Word In The New Testament

Patience, or a derivative, occurs in some sixteen New Testament books. Jesus used the term and so did His apostolic penmen. Near the end of His ministry, Jesus said to His close followers, "In your patience possess ye your souls" (Luke 21:19). This was stated in preparing them for the coming of Rome under Titus to destroy Jerusalem. Paul knew that tribulation worked patience, patience worked experience, and experience worked hope (Rom. 5:3-4). Wavering saints in Hebrews 10:36 needed patience to arrest their foolish plunge back into Judaism. In 2 Peter 1:5-7, patience is one of the Christian graces. The late and lamented Marshall Keeble used to preach a great sermon he called, "Five Steps Into The Church And Seven Steps Into Heaven." The five steps were the five conditions of salvation or plan of salvation. The seven steps into heaven were the Christian graces, one of which was patience.

James counseled his brethren to be possessors of patience (Jam.1:3; Jam. 5:7-8). He closed his counsel with eloquent examples—

the tiller of the soil waiting for harvest time, the patient prophets and then Job himself (Jam. 5:7; Jam. 5:10-11). The husbandman does not plant or sow today and reap a harvest tomorrow. He has to wait patiently during the growing season. Job did not begin to face great lossess in Job 1-2 and reap the regaining of these losses promptly. This reward came in Job 42 but after an extended internal of time.

With these preliminary thoughts now before us, we are prepared to look closely at five expressions embedded in James 5:11.

“Behold, We Count Them Happy Which Endure”

Behold was a frequently employed word by Jesus in his earthly ministry. It was designed in tone and context to enlist prompt and close attention to what is to be propounded. It derives from *idou* and means “See,” “Lo,” “Look” or pay close attention to what is about to be said. Though James was an unbeliever in Jesus during His personal ministry (John 7:5), he no doubt heard his older Brother use that expression countless times. The Holy Spirit inspired his usage of the term here.

We is inclusive of James, the writer, and his brethren to whom he penned “the Epistle of Common Sense.” In five chapters and one hundred eight verses, he referred to his readers fifteen times as his brethren. What affection is herein declared! Future readers of this practical Book would gladly fill this loving category also. If we have obeyed the gospel and are continuing in faithful fashion, we, too, are brethren to James and all Christians of the first century. This *we* is a precious pronoun.

The KJV has the word *happy* here. The ASV has *blessed* which captures quite well the concept James has in mind. Be it remembered the beautiful usage of *blessed* in the lovely beatitudes of Matthew 5:3-11 and the seven bright, beautiful beatitudes gracing the Book of Revelation (Rev. 1:3; Rev. 14:13; Rev. 16:15; Rev. 19:9; Rev. 20:6; Rev. 22:7; Rev. 22:14).

Many people today do not sense any joy as blessings in suffering for righteousness’ sake. James 1:2 began with the wonderful words,

“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.” In such, faith is tried, tested, and results in building patience. In the early days of the church, the twelve apostles were forbidden to preach Christ and were severely punished for doing the forbidden. Luke wrote in Acts 5:41, “And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.” We find marvelous manifestations of this in Paul’s life and labors. From his status as a Roman prisoner, he wrote of joy to the precious Philippian people, “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice” (Phi. 4:4). It was a patient, resourceful, and calm apostle who penned this chapter filled with joy triumphant. He was not bitter; he was not resentful in the face of prison not knowing whether notorious Nero would behead him or set him free. He was set free for a few years and imprisoned in Rome a second time which resulted in his martyrdom for his Master.

Jesus is a great example of this valiant virtue. In Hebrews 12:2, we note with rapt attention,

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Jesus endured. James wanted his readers to endure. In the parable of the sower, the stony and thorny ground hearers did not endure (Mat. 13:20-22). Members of the seven churches in Revelation 2-3 would receive the heavenly rewards if they overcame or endured to the end. Revelation 2:10 states that this faithfulness extends even to martyrdom if such became necessary. They were to be willing to die rather than recant to Caesar by calling him “Lord and God” as Domitian demanded. Domitian was Roman Emperor from A. D. 81-96. The Book of Revelation was written about A. D. 95 or A. D. 96.

In the great, moving Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24-25, Jesus knew the importance of endurance in the coming siege of Jerusalem by the Romans in A. D. 70. Hence, He told His disciples, “But he that

shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” (Mat. 24:13). The end here refers to Jerusalem’s destruction in A. D. 70—not the end of time when Christ comes the second time.

“Ye Have Heard Of The Patience Of Job”

These eight words form the title of this lecture and manuscript. Patience is a key term in this epistle by James. He spoke of patience in James 1:3-4 and James 5:7-8 as well as in James 5:11. Like his half-brother in the flesh and his full brother in the faith, he knew the need for patience. Jesus taught, “In your patience possess ye your souls” (Luke 21:19). Like his good friend and beloved brother Peter, he knew, and knew well, that patience is one of the seven Christian graces (2 Pet. 1:5-7). Had he been alive in A. D. 96, he would have been in ardent accord with banished John who was in the kingdom and **patience** of Jesus Christ (Rev. 1:9).

James knew, and knew well, the power of eloquent exhortations and ardent admonitions. He also knew that effectual, power-packed examples would aid in getting his points home to his readers. In James 5:7-8, he had inculcated the noble need for patience to adorn and enhance their Christian pilgrimage. He and the Spirit knew that a powerful and personal example was needed. The Holy Spirit inspired his pen to write of Job as an example of patience and what an example he was and is!

The godly Job was the focus of a conversation between God and Satan in Job 1-2. Jehovah knew perfectly how dedicated and faithful His servant on earth was. Satan was not impressed with Heaven’s assessment of the just Job. He said Job served God because it paid for him to do so. Satan affirmed that if Job’s family of children and all his possessions were removed, that Job’s faith would fail, falter, and fade. Satan was sure Job would then curse God. God allowed Satan to remove Job’s children and his vast possessions. Job was not in the know of any of these proceedings. His ten children, seven sons and three daughters, were taken instantly. Seven thousand sheep were taken from him. Three thousand camels were killed. Five hundred she asses became casualties. These major losses came one right after the other.

Small men could not and would not have handled such crushing losses without doing what Satan said Job would do. Yet, at the end of Job 1, he “worshipped.” We read in Job 1:22, “In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.”

Patience is endurance. Job endured. Patience is continuing on when the going gets really rough. This Job did. Being the tough saint, he retained his faith in God. Patience had not forsaken him. He was now void of children. He was now void of property holdings. It is amazingly amazing that his patience persisted. He did not give up and quit. No cursing of God left his hallowed lips.

Sorrows galore piled on him in Job 2. Jehovah and Satan again converse with Job as focal point. This time Satan insisted that if Job were touched with an agonizing loss of personal health, he would curse God and die. Satan is permitted to afflict Job with a grave loss of health. God would not allow Satan to take Job’s life. From the top of Job’s head to the sole of his feet, he was afflicted with sore boils. He took potsherd (fragment of a broken vessel) and scraped his boil-covered body that was writhing in the deepest of pain. He sat among the ashes. What a forlorn figure he had become. How great and far-reaching was his current condition in Job 1-2. To add insult to injury, his wife offered no solice of sympathy—not an iota! In cutting words addressed to him that were cold, unfeeling, and void of any empathy, she said, “Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die” (Job 2:9). Why was there no marital aid rendered him by his wife? Had she not taken him for better or worse, in sickness and in health, and in riches and poverty? True, she had suffered loss of children and possessions, but so had he. There is no indication in this chapter that bodily health was removed from her as had been the case with him.

Beginning in Job 3, and continuing for an interval of time, he faced his so-called friends. They made the same mistake in fallacious reasoning that people did in Luke 13 and men and women en masse do still. That fallacious foundation on which they rested their reasoning said, “Suffering comes from personal sins committed.” The more intense the suffering, it has been triggered with enormous sins committed by

afflicted Job. They were convinced beyond the shadow of any doubt that Job was a sinner beyond apt description. His sufferings were almost, if not beyond, human parallel. Therefore, his sins must have been indescribably grievous. Apparently, it never occurred to them that little children suffer in infancy and early childhood due to no fault of their own. People of great piety frequently suffer for many years, and yet, they are righteous people. Jesus met this faulty reasoning in Luke 13:1-5 and also in John 9:1-3 when his disciples asked who had sinned, parents or the man who was born blind. Jesus answered that neither the parents nor the man were guilty of causing his lifelong blindness. People are prone to think this way when great tragedy strikes. They did this when I was a student at Freed-Hardeman College in 1952 when a very destructive tornado hit Henderson on a Friday night. The subsequent Saturday found Henderson citizens asking what great sin they had committed that brought on such devastation. At the very next Chapel service, brother W. Claude Hall answered the faulty reasoning of his Henderson peers. He used Luke 13:1-5 as his text.

People who are prone to ascertain such as contributing factors should look to Jesus who suffered as no man, not even Job, has ever done. Yet, there were no sins in his life producing such.

As the speeches of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar continued in the book, they became more brazen and hostile heaping unjustified misrepresentations upon the head of Job. Comfort and empathy were conspicuous in their total absence.

Job endured it all though there were some dips in facing all that bore down upon his weary shoulders.

Likewise, Elihu's speeches proved to be no solace to Job's severe experiences, both mentally and physically.

Jehovah speaks in Job 38-41 enabling Job to see things in a much clearer light. Jehovah, not Job, was the One capable of running the Universe.

Against insurmountable odds, Job endured. Jehovah was his God at the end of Job 37 just as He had been in Job 1-2 and as He will be in Job 42.

Ye “Have Seen The End Of The Lord”

This was not something concealed from James’ readers. It was something they had seen and also had heard. The word *end* here is *telos* and often refers to the termination of something. However, Greek scholarship informs us the word can also refer to “purpose, aim, design” which has to be the meaning here as per the comments of the scholarly Guy N. Woods in his *Commentary on James*. As readers of the forty-two chapters of this Old Testament book, we are keenly aware of God’s purpose, aim, or design in allowing the pious Job to be tested in such strict measures. But Job was unaware of any of this background between Jehovah and Satan, Arch Enemy of man. For this sad saga to have accomplished what Jehovah and the Holy Spirit had in mind, this had to be concealed from Job, his wife, or the four men who spoke against Job. Job proved conclusively that one can and will serve God from strict love and not because lavish goods have been bequeathed him. Future readers of Job needed to see also that love and loyalty links us with the Lord and not what we received with God’s bounty given us.

Job 42 valiantly vindicated Job. His detractors are brought down from their assumed peaks of superiority over Job. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar had spoken incorrectly of God. In another sense they had spoken incorrectly of Job, Jehovah’s faithful servant. They were told by Examining Jehovah that they needed to make offerings for their grievous sins. They were told that they needed Job to pray for them. They were in grave danger of God’s avenging wrath. God promised them He would hear Job’s entreaty for these three lest the Lord deal with them according to their folly (Job 42:8). They obeyed and Job prayed for these three who had maligned him so unjustly. This speaks well of Job’s character.

In the marvel and majesty of Job 42, we see the omnibenevolent Jehovah in admirable action. Job received twice what he had in possessions. He was restored in the respect others had for him. Again, he has seven sons and three daughters. His daughters were fair and blessed with feminine beauty exceeding all their feminine peers.

“The Lord Is Very Pitiful” In Goodness

He is not just pitiful but very pitiful. What an admirable adverb *very* is in this valiant verse. The ASV has “full of pity.” In a marvelous and majestic manner, He overflows with it. Had He been a God minus pity, He would not have given Job twice what he had in Job 1 or blessed him with the same number of sons and daughters in Job 42 as he had in Job 1:2. Nothing is stated in Job 1 about the beauty of his first set of daughters. However, in Job 42:14-15 his trio of daughters not only are named, but it is said of them, “And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren.”

The Lord Is Of “Tender Mercy”

Eloquent emphasis here is given of His compassion, concern, and sympathy. There was magnified mercy by Jehovah God in Job’s latter end, not only in his vindication among his so-called friends, the gaining back of respect from family and peers, the doubling of earthly possessions, the rich addition of seven sons and three daughters, but also in this final note in the book which reads, “After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons’ sons, even four generations. So Job died, being old and full of days” (Job 42:16-17).

Proverbs 17:6 had not been written in Job’s day. It reads, “Children’s children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers.” Job learned from happy experience joys of children, of grandchildren and even great-grandchildren. If the fourth generation did not include Job’s, then he had great-great grandchildren. Surely, he would have endorsed fully the sentiments in Psalm 127:3-5; “Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord...Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them.”

Conclusion

If in some way Job learned of all the events that took place in Job 1-2, it must have pleased him well relative to Jehovah’s great confidence as expressed in Job 1-2. Perhaps he learned also that his

own life proved conclusively that man can be faithful to God with much or with nothing. In wealth and in poverty, Job was heroic in holiness and fervent in faith. In the galaxy of men he towers highly in the golden virtues he possessed in such abundance.

Paramountly and preeminently, he is the great Biblical example of patience. James so portrayed him and this is how we remember him so fondly and affectionately. May his tribe increase for where he stood is uncrowded.

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CHAPTER 34

Building A Marriage That Can Weather The Storms Of Life— Financial Setbacks, Health Problems, Death Of A Child, etc.

Wade Webster

“If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?” (King James Version, Jer. 12:5). Jeremiah’s point was simple. His people were struggling to be faithful during the best of times. What were they going to do when the times got tougher?

No doubt, Jeremiah’s words have many applications. However, in this lesson, we want to apply them to the subject of marriage. Many marriages today are just barely making it in the best of times. If times get harder, if the horses run or the Jordan swells, they are not going to survive. Many marriages are simply not prepared for the storms of life—financial reversals, tragedies, health problems, job loss. They are doing well to make it with the sun shining and the winds calm.

Amazingly, Job’s marriage faced all of these things at once, and it survived. You might say that Job’s marriage faced “the perfect storm.” Job and his wife were battered from every side:

- *Job’s marriage faced financial reversals.* Job lost everything that he had. He went from the greatest man of the east to the least of the least (Job 1:3). He went from the penthouse to the poorhouse in one day.

- *Job's marriage faced tragedy.* A whirlwind hit the house where Job's children were gathered and crushed them all (Job 1:18-19). Job lost all ten of his children in one day. Perhaps, no tragedy can compare to the loss of a child. Parents are not supposed to bury their children. That is not the natural order.
- *Job's marriage faced health problems.* Satan "smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown" (Job 2:7). Job must have been in constant pain. The sores were likely open and oozing. There may also have been a strong stench associated with the sores and the decaying flesh. Likely, Job's illness would have robbed him of the warmth of human touch (Job 2:8; Job 19:13-20). He would have been treated much as a leper.
- *Job's marriage faced job loss.* Not only had Job's financial resources been removed, he did not have the health even to begin to rebuild them. He was out of work, with little or no hope of ever going back to work. The text records that he "sat down among the ashes" and passed his days scraping himself with a potsherd. Since men find much meaning and satisfaction in their work, this must have been extremely hard for Job. He could not even provide for his own family.

In spite of the perfect storm that Job's marriage faced, it survived. We read of his wife at the beginning of the book (Job 2) and in the middle of the book (Job 19) and at the end of the book (Job 42). Although we do not read of Job's wife directly at the end of the book, it seems clear that she was there. After all, there is a mention of Job being given additional children (Job 42:13-15). How were these new children given? Did Job just wake up one day and have ten new kids roaming through his house and eating his food? I do not think so. They must have come into the world in the way that children generally come into the world. Since there is no record of a new wife, it is reasonable to assume that these children came through the wife that was referenced earlier in the inspired record.

As noted above, Job's wife is only mentioned directly two times within the book (Job 2:9; Job 19:17). Both times, she appears in a negative light. In the second chapter, she encouraged Job to let go of his integrity (Job 2:9), the very thing that God thrice noted positively about him (Job 1:1; Job 1:8; Job 2:3). As you recall, she encouraged Job to "curse God and die." It should be noted that she made this statement only after the second round of afflictions from Satan. She evidently weathered the first round of attacks with her faith intact. However, when she saw the physical suffering of her husband, she folded. In her defense, she had suffered much, too. She had lost her financial assets and buried her children, too. Job's afflictions were her afflictions. In the nineteenth chapter, we again read of Job's wife. Job spoke of his breath as being strange to his wife (Job 19:17). Some believe that Job's statement referred to extremely bad breath. It is argued that bad breath was a side-effect of Job's affliction. However, the expression likely means that Job's wife kept her distance from him. The intimacy that was a natural and needed part of their marriage was absent in their relationship during the time of Job's trial.

For sure, Job's marriage faced some strong, sustained, and straight-line winds. Yet, it survived. Our marriages are not likely to face all that Job's faced. However, they may face some of them. Therefore, we need to try to build a marriage that can weather the storms of life; even, the kind of "perfect storm" that Job faced.

Preparation

Job did not try to batten down the hatches in the midst of the storm. He prepared well in advance. Before the storm ever appeared on the horizon, Job was described as a "perfect" man (Job 1:1). He was complete or mature before Satan began his assault. Job had been preparing for the perfect storm for some time. He was strong going into the storm (Pro. 24:10). Not only had Job built a strong relationship with God before the storm arose, he had built a strong relationship with his wife. You simply do not survive the kind of storm that they survived without having a good relationship going into it.

Under the law of Moses, God encouraged couples to build a strong relationship in the first year of marriage. We read, “When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken” (Deu. 24:5). God wanted couples to lay the proper foundation for a long and loving marriage. Therefore, men were exempted from military service and other activities that would separate them from the bride they had chosen. Although men are not given a year off under the New Testament system, they are encouraged to spend much time with their wives and to come to know them well. Peter wrote, “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered” (1 Pet. 3:7). Husbands and wives must lay a foundation in the first year of marriage that will sustain them in the seventieth year of marriage. No doubt, you recall the parable that Jesus told of the two builders (Luke 6:47-49). Both men built while the sun was shining and the wind was calm. However, one of the men, the wise man, built with the winds and rains in mind. Rather than building upon the sand, as the foolish man did, he dug deep, and laid the foundation upon a rock. Because the wise man made the necessary preparation, the winds, the rains, and the floods did not shake his house.

Prayer (Devotion)

Job was a man of devotion and prayer. In the first chapter, we read, “And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually” (Job 1:5). Although this passage mentions what Job did toward his children, it is reasonable to conclude that he did the same for his wife, their mother.

Please note that Job was in the habit of prayer long before the calamity came. He did not take up the practice in the midst of the

storm. When the calamity came, Job knew what to do. He fell down upon the ground and worshipped (Job 1:20). He had lost everything except for his faith. He still had God and he would cling to Him. I am convinced that prayer kept Job from fainting. I am confident that it will do the same for us (Luke 18:1; 1 Pet. 5:7; Phi. 4:6-7). Sadly, I am afraid that many marriages are not supported or braced by prayer. Husbands and wives are not praying for one another. They are not praying for the success of the marriage.

Patience

No doubt, we have all heard of “the patience of Job” (Jam. 5:11). While it is true that Job earned his reputation of patience through the trials that he endured, he clearly possessed some patience before the trials began. The trials that he endured not only produced patience, but they revealed what was already there. James wrote, “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (Jam. 1:2-4). It is fitting that Job is described as “perfect” in the opening verse of the book (Job 1:1). Patience was already at work. He had let patience have her perfect work in his life.

Satan told God that Job would not maintain his steadfastness when the storms came (Job 1:9-11; Job 2:4-5). However, he did (Job 1:20-22; cf. Heb. 10:34; 1 Pet. 2:20). In fact, Job maintained his patience even when Satan spoke through his wife (Job 2:9-10). It seems that Satan had the opportunity to remove Job’s wife at the same time that he removed Job’s children. However, he left her around for the purpose of using her. Satan was trying to get Job to abandon ship. However, Job knew that the only way to survive was to remain in the ship (Acts 27:31). In like manner, if our marriages are going to make it to the end, we are going to have to have patience (Heb. 10:36). We need to acquire it in good times, that we might perfect it in bad times.

Because Job and his wife did not abandon ship, they enjoyed great blessings at the end (Job 42). If they had left God and one

another in the storm, they would not have enjoyed the double bounty that God had in store for them. In addition to the material blessings, they would have missed out on the pitter-patter of little feet again within their home.

Likely, storms are forecasted for our future. If our marriages are going to weather these storms, then we are going to have to make preparation right now. We are going have to establish clear lines of communication with God through prayer and to develop the patience that will be needed to ride out the storm.

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CHAPTER 35

The Christian Woman And Affliction

Carol Harris

We as women are called upon to handle so many things and all at the same time. Our schedules are so busy, so packed that we simply have no time for things to go wrong, and yet, they do. And so the question for us today is, how well are we doing in dealing with those things that go wrong in our life? Maybe a good starting place for us as Christian women who want to cope better with our troubles is to look at our attitudes.

So my primary focus today will deal with this particular aspect, our attitudes. Can we say that our attitudes are what they ought to be? Are there some changes that I need to make in my attitude, so that I might be more pleasing to God? Each might ask herself, do I need an attitude adjustment?

Webster defines the word *attitude* as “a bodily posture showing a mental state or mood, or a manner that shows one’s disposition” (“Attitude”). We might call it temperament.

For most of us, our attitude will manifest itself outwardly in some manner, but even if it is only in our heart or mind, it can be sinful for us because it poisons our heart. Eventually, it can make us bitter and angry. In Proverbs 4:23, the writer says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (King James Version). Sooner or later a bad attitude left unchecked will be apparent to all. Then what happens to our example for others?

Matthew writes in Matthew 5:16, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Now let us think about this: if we glorify God

when we let our light shine, who are we glorifying when we do not let our light shine? Of course, the answer would be Satan.

Our example before others is very important in pleasing God. And yet our thoughts are also important. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 3:20, "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain." God knows our thoughts. Peter told Simon in Acts 8:22, "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." So you see an attitude of heart can mean the difference in being saved or lost! I wonder sometimes if we really take this seriously.

I know that this lectureship is devoted to the book of Job, and I considered spending our time today talking about Mrs. Job. Certainly, there are lessons from her that would profit us. But I decided to concentrate on a positive example of one who handled affliction, rather than the negative one of Mrs. Job.

Lessons From Ruth, The Moabiteess

I thought about Ruth, the Moabiteess, of course. Her great story is found in the book of Ruth. She was born and reared as part of a heathen nation, a nation who worshipped idols. Chemosh was one of the idol gods that the Moabites worshipped (Num. 21:29). That worship at times included the offering of human sacrifices (2 Kin. 3:27). But Ruth by the providence of God was introduced to a family of God's people. Because of a famine in the land of Canaan, Elimilech took his wife Naomi and their two sons and left Bethlehem-Judah. They traveled to the land of Moab in search of food. While in that land, their two sons took wives from the heathen people around them. But, after living there for ten years, Elimilech and their two sons died. Naomi and her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, were left to fend for themselves; they were all alone (Ruth 1:1-5).

Later on, Naomi after hearing that the famine was now over in her homeland decided to leave Moab and return to Bethlehem. She told her daughters-in-law to return to their mother's houses and she would go on alone. After some discussion, Orpah went back,

but Ruth clave to Naomi. She was determined to stay with her and so she did (Ruth 1:6-19).

I would like for us to look at some of Ruth's characteristics. Maybe there are some things that we might learn from her, some attitudes of heart that we might need to incorporate in our lives.

Ruth Had An Attitude Of Acceptance

Ruth was a young woman who had lost her husband. We see no evidence whatsoever in the Scripture to show that she ever blamed God for her loss. She if anything was more determined to follow Him. Naomi however, felt the need to blame God for a time. In Ruth 1:21, Naomi said, "I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty: why then call me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?"

Are we like Naomi sometimes, looking for someone to blame? We must remember when we are faced with affliction, whether it is death or sickness, it is not from God but from Satan. We must put the blame where it belongs. God does allow Satan to use these tactics, but He does not cause those problems for us. All of the death, sickness, and sorrow come from the father of lies, Satan himself.

Somehow when I think of Ruth, I see her with a smile, not a frown. Have you ever noticed those people that frown constantly? It seems that if they were to smile, their faces might actually crack. Then on the other side of the coin, have you noticed those people who smile even when they are oppressed? Which one of those are we drawn to? I think we would all answer the same. We enjoy being around those who smile, those who are happy, those who show the Christian life to be a joyful one.

Ruth did not sit and cry over what could not be changed. Her husband was gone; nothing was going to bring him back to her. I am sure those of you who have lost your mate know how hard it is to pick up and go on. And yet for a child of God, there really is no choice. We must go on. Ruth not only went on with her life, but she went on with an attitude of I will accept the things that I have no power to change, and she did so with grace. She seemed to display

the same attitude of heart that Paul demonstrated in Philippians 4:11-13. We read,

Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Paul said the ability to be content in any situation is a learned trait and ladies, we **must** realize this. We learn from God's Word and then put that which we learned into practice. Do not forget that old saying "Practice makes perfect." It makes good sense!

David said in Psalm 146:5, "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God." Happiness or contentment should not be based on the material things we have here on earth, or even the things that happen to us, but should be based on the hope we have of heaven, and the knowledge that we belong to God. Only then can we accept anything and everything that we are called upon to bear. **Remember, it is not what happens to us but how we handle those things that happen to us.** That, in a nutshell, is what really counts.

Ruth's Heart Was Focused.

In Ruth 1:16, she said that she would go wherever Naomi went and that Naomi's God would be her God. I believe this is a pretty good indication that she saw the truth about idol worship and because of the influence of her husband and his family, she now believes in the one true God. Ladies, how focused are we? Is our God the focus in our lives? I mean really! If in fact He is, then we should start every day of our life with Him in the forefront of our minds. Proper focus prevents forgetfulness when the problems or affliction present themselves in our day-to-day lives. David knew this for he said in

Psalm 119:11, “Thy word have I hid (laid up) in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.” If we would store the Word in our hearts, then when that trouble that is certainly going to come makes its way into our lives, **we would be prepared**. You would not even think of preparing a meal for someone without checking your pantry or going to the grocery store to make sure that you have all the ingredients that you need. You would be very certain that you allowed enough time to prepare that meal for your guest. Well ladies, how can we at times, be so devoid of understanding as to believe that we can handle affliction in the right manner without any preparation? Of course, we cannot! Yet, is not that what many do? David said in Psalm 40:8, “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.”

Do we know the Word? Is it planted in our hearts? Do we have enough of God’s Word reserved there to sustain us in our days of affliction? Do we ask God’s help often? Do we show Him our thankfulness for that help that He so faithfully gives us? Ruth saw the value of right focus; what about us?

Ruth Recognized The Need For Being In The Right Company

She saw in Naomi someone who believed in God, even though Naomi became bitter for a while. She had lost her husband and her two sons; she sort of blamed God (Ruth 1:21). She forgot her focus for a time, but still her influence in the past had been good enough that Ruth desired to follow her and to worship the God that she worshipped (Ruth 1:16-17).

In 2 Corinthians 6:14, Paul wrote: “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness and what communion hath light with darkness?”

Then the writer of Proverbs said in Proverbs 6:27, “Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned?” When we make friends with the world, we are playing with fire. Rather than influencing them for good, many times we allow ourselves to become dulled to the will of God. Then we slowly drift back into the world, little by little. I am not saying that we should not have any dealings with those who are not Christians, but I am saying that

we should not make them our bosom buddies, our best friends, our closest confidants. Remember that our friends have a great influence over us. We many times rely on them for advice and for help. If they are not Christians, what kind of advice will they offer us: worldly or Godly? Think about that for a while!

In reality, we are setting ourselves up for failure. Let us make our close friendships with those who are like-minded, those who will advise us in the way of righteousness. Ruth chose to go with Naomi; she saw in her the good that was not prevalent among her people. She chose to be with one who believed in the one true God. She chose to be with someone who would help her please God rather than pull her away.

Ruth Was Thankful; She Counted Her Blessings Rather Than Complaining

She was ready to face affliction because she had made the necessary preparations. Part of her preparation was developing a thankful heart. Paul said in Colossians 2:6-7, “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: Rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.”

She had grown up in Moab where there was no famine. There was plenty of food in her homeland. She could have murmured and complained about not having food after coming to Bethlehem; she could have blamed God; she could have wished to be back in her homeland, but she did not. You know it was already harvest time when they returned to Bethlehem, and she and Naomi had no crop to harvest. How were they going to eat (Ruth 1:22)? Instead of looking back and remembering what she left at home, she looked toward the future. She was ready to handle this affliction with the right attitude of heart. She was thankful.

Ruth Was Not Afraid Of Work

She did not expect things to be given to her. She expected to work for not only her food but for Naomi's also. She did not expect a handout! In Proverbs 31:27, speaking of the virtuous woman, the writer says: “She looketh well to the ways of her household and eateth

not the bread of idleness.” We get in trouble when we allow ourselves to sit and hold our hands for too long. We need to keep busy. Paul wrote in 2 Thessalonians 3:10: “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.” Ruth expected to work for her food; she was willing to do her part knowing that God would do the rest. She was not lazy but willing to work. When there was no food, she did not sit down and cry poor me. She was up to the task at hand (Ruth 2:2-3). She had prepared herself for such a time. Ladies, I do not mean to be a bearer of bad tidings, but we could find ourselves in just such a situation of need. Our nation’s economy has taken quite a tumble, and we know not what the future holds. There are a lot of people today who have lost their homes, their cars, and many are wondering where their next meal will come from. **But there is hope.** Luke said in Luke 12:29-31, “And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you.”

We have to learn how to prioritize things and then we will have no worries about our physical needs. But are we ready to accept what comes our way? We had better be if we plan to overcome. We must be willing to work while it is still day but trusting in His promise of those things that are needful for us. Matthew said in Matthew 11:28, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” What a promise to the faithful worker—**rest**. I am thankful to God for that promise!

Ruth Had An Attitude Of Humility

Ruth was willing to work; she was not above getting her hands dirty. She went out and gleaned in the field of Boaz. He noticed her and showed kindness to her. He told her to continue to glean in his field, and he charged the young men not to touch her. He was providing her with a place to work and gather her food and also a safe environment in which to work (Ruth 2:3-9). What was Ruth’s reaction? Ruth 2:10 tells us, “Then she fell on her face, and bowed

herself to the ground and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?" I believe there are some of us even in the Church who have become so high and mighty, so egotistical that we actually believe that we deserve our blessings. We expect everything to be laid out for us. After all, we deserve it! How sad, especially since all we really deserve is death. Paul said in Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Then in Romans 6:23, he wrote, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Ruth, after losing her husband, did not ask "Why me?" However, when she was blessed with the help, protection, and compassion of Boaz, she asked "Why me?" She seemed to feel unworthy of the blessings showered on her. James tells us in James 4:10, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up." Let us make sure we leave the lifting up to our Lord, the righteous judge. Through the providence of God, Ruth was lifted up by the hand of Boaz. If we will but humble ourselves, we too shall be lifted up.

Ruth Had An Attitude Of Obedience

She was willing to ask the advice of her elder (Naomi), and she was ready to obey her. Now, can you imagine the majority of today's women asking advice of their mothers-in-law? Not often, and certainly not obeying them. Well Ruth did, and it was to her credit. She asked Naomi about going out into the fields to glean corn, and Naomi answered, "Go, my daughter" (Ruth 2:2). Each time she came home, she sought Naomi's counsel. Ruth listened to that counsel. Do you think that Naomi always did and said what Ruth thought she should have? I doubt it! You see, Ruth had learned to love and respect Naomi, and she even obeyed her.

Remember ladies, your mother-in-law is not perfect, but then neither are you. Matthew writes in Matthew 7:12, "Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets." Sorry, ladies, but this includes your mother-in-law as well. Purpose to love your mother-in-law; great blessings will come as a result. It will make for

an even better relationship with your husband. He **will** notice how you treat his mother.

Ruth Desired To Help And Comfort Others

She was a great help and comfort to Naomi. She was a young woman; she could have sought a husband without Naomi's aid. She could have worked less time and had enough food for her needs, but she thought of Naomi. She wanted to help and comfort her. I am afraid in today's society, many are only concerned with what they want, what is good for them, never caring about anyone else. Ruth was not like this. She loved Naomi; and she acted on that love. Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 3:7, "Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith." Paul knew what affliction was; he knew what it was like to suffer, but he was thankful for the comfort of faithful brethren. The strength of our faith will have an immeasurable effect on other Christians. Have you ever considered that your faithfulness might comfort someone else? I feel certain that Naomi found comfort in Ruth (Ruth 4:15).

As A Result Of All These Wonderful Attitudes Of Heart, Ruth Was Comforted

Boaz was a kinsman of Elimilech and he chose Ruth to be his wife; he was willing to raise up seed to his dead kinsman, Mahlon. It would not have been difficult for him to love Ruth because she made herself lovable. She was kind and considerate of others. God blessed them with a son whom they named Obed, and of course, we know that Obed begat Jesse and Jesse begat David. Through this woman from the heathen nation of Moab came King David, whom God said was a man after His own heart (Acts 13:22).

Ruth was given more than she ever hoped for. She was given the comfort that only a faithful follower of God can dream of having. I think maybe Ruth would have understood David's words in Psalm 118:14, "The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my salvation".

What about us? Are we following God faithfully? Can we hope for the kind of comfort that comes from God? Do we really believe that God is our strength? If so, should it not show in our lives?

Does our life show that God is our song? If not, why not? We ought to be the happiest people in the world. **The Lord is our song!**

Do we live as if He is our salvation? Let each of us take a close look at herself. Do I need that attitude adjustment?

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CHAPTER 36

Guarding Our Lips Against Foolish Speaking

Celine Sparks

Some days are like that. Some days cause your tongue to break off the leash and tear into the nearest innocent bystander. Some days, the weather will not cooperate, the check bounces, the moth balls did not work, and you are afraid to ask what is in the playpen. And whatever comes out of your mouth, you are really not responsible, or are you?

Flash back for a moment to a prominent woman in history.

She was on top of the world. Her pearls were real, and her fur was long. When she walked arm in arm with her husband, the community watched, and talked.

I do not have Scripture to back those claims specifically, but I imagine that is the way it was, because I do have one Scripture which says it all, “This man was the greatest of all the people of the East” (New King James Version, Job 1:3). This verse follows a description of Job’s material wealth.

What first lady ever had it as good as Mrs. Job? What world leader, movie star, or investment firm leader ever laid that claim? But it gets so much better. Not only was her man a millionaire (in our vernacular), but he was a good man. In fact, he was the best. Not only did he lavishly bestow his wife with earthly treasures, but his integrity was so outstanding that scripture tells us, “that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil.”

What a catch! It was as near a perfect world as we can get this side of heaven, because in addition to the marriage and the possessions, they had a great family life—seven sons and three daughters.

Job was all about being a father. Every day, it concerned Job not only what those children were doing spiritually on the outside, but even the thoughts they were thinking on the inside (Job 1:5). Would you not like to have this guy come to a parenting seminar at your congregation?

Everything was right in Mrs. Job's world . . . until that day. She knew something was wrong as soon as Job walked through the door of that giant mansion (Job 1:3). Job's hair was gone—shaven. His robe was torn. Where was her confident man of leadership? Something was very wrong. Something bad. Her heart sank immediately into her stomach; she was nauseated, chilled, and weak in the knees. She was afraid to ask.

When Mrs. Job learned that all of their assets were gone in one instance, with no warning, I imagine it was a devastating blow. There had been a tornado, there had been a fire, there had been a raid—all in the same day. How do you go from riches to rags in one day? She was about to find out. Still in a state of shock, it would take time for reality to set in.

Material wealth is just stuff, and Job, being the spiritual giant that he was, had to know that. They would recover, together. But the next news was unthinkable. The babies Mrs. Job had carried and nursed at her breasts, rocked and walked, taught and nourished, cradled, played with, bandaged, laughed with, had late night talks with drying their tears, guided them into adulthood (though I am not certain they were all quite there yet [Job 1:19])—All of her precious sons and daughters were gone. “Honey, they are dead. They are not coming back,” I can hear Job saying.

Then I imagine she began to name names, all of the names of her children. Screaming at times, barely whispering at others. Questioning. Walking in circles. Dazed. Banging her head into the wall, and praying somehow it was not true.

That is the scene I imagine. The Bible never even tells us how she received the news or what she did next. But being a mother, I cannot imagine it any differently. I know the God that had a conversation with Satan about Job, that put those babies in Mrs. Job's womb, that

promised He'd never leave us or forsake us, that watched as His own Son bled and died in a brutal scene—I know that He was there with her, as He has been with every one of His children who has ever been pained with the death of a child.

As valuable as that assurance is, it does not change the circumstances of the grief, and grief sometimes calls out in the irrational tones of a confused and broken language.

I believe that is what it did within Mrs. Job in chapter two, verse nine, “Then his wife said to him, ‘Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!’”

Grief had run amuck, but it had not run its gamut until now. Watching her husband, once the most esteemed man in the hemisphere, now in poverty and misery, scraping oozing sores with a broken piece of a flower pot, she spoke what should never be uttered.

Can we blame her? Certainly! It is never okay to blaspheme God. It is never okay to tell a loved one to, “Just die, alright?” But if ever there were circumstances which would warrant one to “speak as one of the foolish women,” and there are not, it would be Mrs. Job’s.

Now, what was our excuse again?

Maybe we have not told our loved ones to curse God and die, but from our speech alone, would we be regarded as one of the foolish women? Just who are these women Job referred to? I do not know, but in Old Testament writing the word *foolish* is almost always connected to idolatry—those who do not trust in the living God.

Foolish Women Do not Have Filters

Does our speech confirm that we trust in the living God, or is it foolish? When God’s women speak as the foolish women, it points to a broken filter. There are organs in our body which are involuntary—the liver, the heart, the kidney. They work without our ever thinking about it. The tongue should not be one of them.

Many women have what Dave Barry quipped as Blitherer’s disease. In this condition, whatever thought comes into the brain immediately pops out of the mouth and into the atmosphere. And there is an epidemic out there. Turn the filters on!

I arrived at my father's country home last week, and the kids could not get there fast enough. They packed their swim trunks and left their toothbrushes. They had but one thought—to do a backward cannonball off the diving board. But when we got there, they were sadly disappointed. The water was green and icky. It was filthy and smelled stale. No one was swimming in that. We found out the problem. The filter was broken. Broken filters always bring disappointment, and they did in Mrs. Job's case.

Sometimes we will describe a sister this way: "Boy, she really says what she thinks." That is not a compliment; it means her filter is broken. Mrs. Job's speech was icky, filthy, smelled stale. She obviously said what she thought in the midst of her agony, but she should have run it through the filter first.

James says it this way: be slow to speak (Jam. 1:19).

Foolish Women Say, "It is Not My Fault"

Those who are foolish, who do not trust in God, never acknowledge sin or have any remorse for it. Does our speech sound like theirs? Is our tongue constantly trying to cover for us? John addresses that problem in 1 John 1. A covering tongue can say one of the following, "I do not really see anything wrong with it, as long as nobody goes too far with it." Danger. "I do not really see anything wrong with it. After all, we are adults," or "We are Christians," or "We all understand we do not mean to let this get out of hand here." Extreme danger. First John 1:6 says, "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth." We are speaking as the foolish women.

A covering tongue also says, "It was not me," and "It is not my fault." There may be many things in this life that are not my fault, but that does not give me permission to announce it. Usually an announcement indicates one thing: fault. But that covering tongue will wag, "I have not done anything wrong." Verse eight says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). We speak as one of the foolish women.

Sometimes a covering tongue will fake sophistication. It will call sin things like alternate lifestyle, disease, celebration, experimentation, or even maturity. A video game gets an M (mature) rating for this: “May contain intense violence, blood and gore, sexual content and/or strong language” (Game Ratings). Now exactly what about that is mature?

I even heard a radio preacher say the phrase “so-called sin” the other day. If preachers cannot talk about sin, they are in the wrong profession. A tongue that pretties up sin is foolish. Redemption of man from sin is the theme of the entire Bible. God’s Word is null and void if we have not sinned. It is a lie that Jesus came to die for our sins, if there are none. It is exactly as 1 John 1:10 says, “If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.” And that is foolish talking.

In the parable of the prodigal son, there are four little words that are key. “He came to himself” (Luke 15:17). This indicates to me that he went everywhere else first with a foolish tongue. It was his father’s fault, it was his brother’s fault, it was his friend’s fault, it was the harlot’s fault, it was the employer’s fault, it was the pig’s fault, but when he came to himself...suddenly there was a realization of his own sin. Foolish speaking had turned to God-fearing speaking. Now he was thinking. Now his filter was on, so much so that he planned out word for word his apology. It is the kind of speaking a God-fearing tongue does. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). It is in the heart of the passage we have been discussing. The true solution is located right in the middle of all the wrong ones. It always is when you look for it, when you come to it just as the prodigal son did. He is faithful and just to forgive us. Just how faithful? Just how just?

Luke 15:18-19 records the prodigal’s plan for what he was going to say.” It was a good plan. In verse 21, he began it just as prepared verbatim, but he did not even get to finish. The Father fully restored him, and called out orders to kill the fatted calf, before the son could even finish his sentence. Make no mistake; the Father loves the tongue that can say, “It is my fault. I have sinned.”

Foolish Women Say, “It Will Never Work!”

Remember again that foolishness is always equated in Scripture to those who do not trust in God. Children sing, “My God is so big, so strong and so mighty, there is nothing my God cannot do,” but adults change the words around a little. Often, we speak as the foolish women, saying “That will never work”; “We have tried that before”; “We have never done it that way”; “We just cannot grow”; “We do not have enough money”; “We do not have enough people”; and “You Will see.”

The spirit of Eeyore floods our church buildings, and those within its walls utter that which shows no confidence in God. What we are really saying when we say “We are not big enough” is that “God is not big enough.” No wonder He is so displeased with this. The Promised Land was Israel’s for the taking. Caleb said, “Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it” (Num. 13:30). But those with the foolish tongues blurted in, “We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we” (Num. 13:31).

Negative words are contagious. I wonder which one of the twelve spies first hinted that it would be too much for them. Was it Igal? Nahbi, maybe? Whoever it was had the others doubting until fully ten of the twelve were chiming in that it could not be done. Not only that, but the ten dominoed through the congregation until the whole congregation stayed up all night crying! (Num. 14:1)

What if, like Joshua and Caleb, those ten spies had chosen encouraging words? Think how different the outcome would have been. Think about some of the tragedies that occurred during the next forty years that would have been altogether avoided: the revolt of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram which resulted in 250 deaths (Num. 16); the thirst at Meribah which damaged Moses’ relationship with God (Num. 20); Balaam’s perverse plan to weaken Israel through sexual sin (Num. 21-25); and hordes of other complications and plagues that space here will not permit me to list.

Words are so powerful; watch them! The next time the elders or the youth minister or the new convert come up with an exciting

plan for church growth, if it is scriptural and the eldership approves it, pray about it with all your might, get behind it with your words, work with zeal, and watch God in action.

God has never been about blessing those who were careful to keep the amount they had, who already were well able to tackle a job smaller than their work force, and who were content with mediocrity. God is about armies of three hundred, budgets of two mites, supplies of five stones, little hearts bursting with faith that take on Giants, and mouths that say, “This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand” (1 Sam. 17:46).

Foolish Women Say, “Let Us Count Raindrops Instead of Rainbows.”

In kindergarten, we used to count out loud. That is still the way I like to do it. But if you are going to do it out loud, be careful to do it right. Martha was counting out loud in Luke 10, but she counted the cumbered way. She counted all the things that she had to do but did not have time to, all the things that were going wrong in the kitchen, all the ways her sister could be helping but was not, all the people that would be here any minute, and how many minutes were not going to be enough, until finally her counting exploded into “Lord, do you not care?” (Luke 10:40). There it was; the tongue that did not trust in the Lord. She was speaking as one of the foolish women.

Martha just did not know how to count. She forgot to count that she was honored with the most wonderful house guest ever in the history of man, before or since that time. She forgot that she herself was privileged to serve Him. She forgot about the great and unique opportunity to glean from his Divine teaching personally. She did not count the roof overhead or that disastrous kitchen in the back. She did not count that if she was having trouble serving, that meant that she had something to serve.

Complaining and ingratitude are not sins that we think about a lot—I think I could say I have never seen one person walk down the aisle and repent of complaining. It is just part of our culture, right? If we do not like the weather, we say it loud and clear. If our French

fries are not greasy enough, we march right up to the counter and let the little person in the visor know about it. Cultural or not, God is not pleased.

The Israelites complained about their food and remembered that the sand was shinier on the other side of the wilderness. Their tongues were doing a lot of foolishness, and God was so disgusted that He sent a plague that killed them before they could even chew their food (Num. 11).

It may be one of the little sins to us, but it is a biggie to God. Read 2 Timothy 3:2-4 to see how it ranks.

Are you counting raindrops instead of rainbows? Get some perspective. Martha was again found serving in John 12:2, but this time she knew how to count. Lazarus, who had been dead, was sitting right there at the table, and Martha did not have to count past one to realize that her blessings far outweighed spilled oil or burnt beans.

Foolish Women Say, “I Will Have Whatever You Are Having.”

Our language as Christians ought to be different from the language of those around us. James says so in James 3:10: “Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.” But it is exactly what happens sometimes. I read the following on Facebook the other day: “God puts people in your life for a season and for a reason.” This was sandwiched between two other posts by the same person on the same wall, both of which were brimming with multiple curse words.

It may be that we would never let such foul comments come out of our mouth or be on our wall, but there is somehow a temptation to prove that we can come as close as possible without crossing the line. Those who know me best know that I love humor maybe a little more than I should. I would almost rather laugh than eat—almost. But there is really nothing funny in crass words, innuendo, abrasive slurs, and really-close euphemisms. Just because the woman in the office chair next to us does it, does not mean a Christian should have whatever she is having. Coarse speech is not attractive. It does

draw attention, if that is what you want, but so do busted zippers and mustard on your chin.

But the “having whatever you are having” problem goes beyond this. Sometimes we find ourselves in full verbal agreement with that which, at best, is a tug away from Christian morals and Scriptural mandates. It seems if we are around it enough, our mouth shifts to automatic, and starts sounding like the one in the office chair next to us (whatever she is having). I cannot think of any other reason that friends who used to sit up all night with me in college, their consciences giving their tongues a workout, discussing things like never feeling good about missing a Bible class to get an early start on a road trip, what to do when we attend a secular event that turns into a spiritual one with worship patterns we are really not comfortable with in light of Scripture, being careful about what we wear to the grocery store—just good day-to-day evaluations of ourselves speaking out loud and candidly among friends—How is it that those same friends are sending me messages telling me they have joined a church now which is not quite the one we read about in the New Testament? How is it that their religious profiles on Facebook say something other than Christian? How is it that that they are verbal activists for *not* defining marriage as between a man and woman? How have we come this far? I really do not think you can get there from here without a whole lot of foolish speaking in between.

Speech that compromises, speech that yields to the crowd, speech that yields to pressure can happen in the church and in the world. It happened in Galatians 2:13, where it says that even Barnabas was carried away with the hypocrisy of those around him. It happened in Luke 22 when Peter’s mouth felt extreme pressure to deny what he knew to be true and to curse. Denial of the living God is foolish speaking, and we can deny knowing Him directly as Peter did, or we can deny him by trying to sound agreeable and conforming to the world’s patterns. At the office, at the gym, at the play day, we can nod along with talk which supports immoral trends—murder labeled as pro-choice, adultery labeled as marriage, drunkenness labeled as good times, lust labeled as prom night, and all kinds of

movies, shows, songs which are at the top of the charts, but which really promote everything that Christ's blood is trying to save us *from*. And then when we are put on the spot, we find our mouths, maybe to our surprise at first, forming some words that fall in line with exactly what the crowd is saying. Conservative politicians were put on the spot in the 2008 election to answer whether they believed in evolution or not. Some said that they did, some hem-hawed, and only two of the eight or so in the room confidently affirmed the literal six-day creation in Scripture.

Closer to home, “fundamental evangelists” were interviewed on a national news show, and asked whether they supported pluralism—a number of faiths holding beliefs in various types of gods. The question was phrased, and the atmosphere was such, that denouncing pluralism would have seemed radical. One of the guests was at one time a faithful preacher in the Lord's church and was asked specifically about Islam. Here's what he said: “Well, I guess it depends on if you are asking it from a political or religious point of view.” The interviewer clarified that it was religious, and then the preacher said, “Religious point of view—it is a different approach to God than the Christian approach to God. My understanding as a Christian is that we are saved by what Christ did for us, whereas the Islamic faith says we are saved by what we do for God” (Larry King Live).

In a moment when Christ could have been lifted up before hundreds of thousands as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, it became, instead, an “I'll have whatever you are having” moment. The statement succumbed to the general tone of the crowd. Guard against it at all costs. Here are four ways:

1. Stay in the Word. Keep a comprehensive knowledge of the Bible through regular study, so that you never really have to say what you think but can always defer to the Holy Spirit. “Have whatever *He* is having.”

2. Keep an open conversation going with your Father. At regular times? Yes. Every morning? Good. But also as you hear opportunities present themselves around you, ask for help to get it right before you open your mouth.

3. Keep company as much as you can with other Christians. As Hebrews 10:25 says, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together,” and as Acts 2:46 says, “Continuing daily with one accord.” When we are living our lives as one family of God, that support carries over into confidence in the midst of the enemy.

4. Realize and accept up front that you are going to be ridiculed. You do not have to win every argument (or even have the first one) to stand successfully. God’s wisdom is foolishness to the world (1 Cor. 1:18). If they think you are strange, it is a good sign (1 Pet. 4:4).

Do not fall in line with whatever everyone else is having, when all that really matters is what He orders.

Foolish Women Say, “That is Not the Way I Would Do It.”

Ever had a huge piece of lumber in your eye? Maybe not, but if you ever do, a fun game to play is to try to find a mote in someone else’s eye and pick it out. What a ludicrous scene! Only the One creative enough to make zebra stripes and duck-billed platypuses could come up with it. But it was an ingenious illustration to show how ridiculous it is when we criticize others.

It is not so funny, though, on the receiving end, and it can be a huge discouragement, particularly when a person is doing a good work. Maybe it is not the way you would do it. When the woman in John 12 chose to break an alabaster box of expensive perfume in order to anoint Jesus’ head, it was not the way Judas would have done it. And pretty quickly, the criticism started. “Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?” (John 12:5). Jesus had three words for the critics, “Let her alone” (John 12:7).

In John 5, Jesus performed an incredible miracle. A man who had not been able to walk for thirty-eight years, suddenly, at Jesus’ beckoning, stood up, rolled his bed up, and walked. It was a very good day that would never be forgotten by those privileged enough to witness it first-hand. But there is always someone who can ruin a good day. Out of all of the wonder and joy brought about by this occasion, there were some who were struggling to find something,

anything, to criticize. This is what they came up with: The healer was allowing the healed to carry a mat on the Sabbath day. Sometimes the very thing a person criticizes is a tribute to the person's character they are attempting to assault. If that is the best they can come up with, if that is the most heinous crime they can find, what an excellent reference they have become for that person (in this case, the Lord) in spite of themselves.

Mote pickers sometimes appear among us. In one stateside mission point, the missionary put together a well-advertised Gospel campaign that was so strongly supported that parking became a problem and feeding the multitudes more so. His house was nearby, and he figured if he stripped his large den of its furnishings and lined it instead with folding tables, he could swing the fellowship meals there. The elders at his supporting congregation were immediately notified and informed that the preacher was using empty classrooms in the church building for personal storage (his couch). Amidst the joy and celebration of a successful Gospel effort, someone looked hard and long to find something to criticize.

Is that who any of us want to be? Job's wife came pretty close. She had the choice to be encouraging, to be the companion at Job's side, to pray with him and cry with him, but she criticized him for his perseverance. Job's wife basically said, "It is not what I would do." She spoke as one of the foolish women.

Is there a time for criticism? Is there a time for rebuke? There sure is, but it is not as often as some people think. Proverbs 27:5 says, "Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed." Proverbs 9:8 says, "Rebuke a wise man, and he will love you." Second Timothy 4:2 tells us not only to encourage, but also to reprove and rebuke.

Rebuke is so important because it can be the channel through which your sister's or brother's soul is saved. James 5:20 says, "Let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins." David, the man after God's own heart, stood separated from God because of adultery and murder, Nathan loved him enough to confront him (2 Sam. 12). Because it is so important, we need to keep the door open for it by

having a constant positive spirit of communication and closeness with those in Christ.

In a study by John Gottman, divorce could be predicted with ninety-four percent accuracy among married couples based on the number of negative and positive exchanges that took place in their conversations. For a marriage to survive, it was found that there should be five positive affirmations for every one criticism (Big Impact of Small Interactions).

If that is true among married couples, the same ratio should apply to other relationships we value. With your sisters in Christ, make sure your speech is yielding plenty of positives. Encourage!

One of the ways we can be most like God is by encouraging. Take a look at Joshua 1. It is as if God Almighty just could not quit when it came to encouraging. Multiple times he said the same thing—Five! (Remember that ratio?) And each time, it consisted of three main ideas: (1) You can do this; (2) I'll be with you; and (3) Be strong and very courageous.

It is an excellent outline for encouraging our sons and daughters as they face each school day, new Christians as they face the world, burnt-out Christians as they step back up to the plate, everyone!

“You can do this. God will be with you. Just be strong and courageous.”

It can keep us from speaking as one of the foolish women.

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CHAPTER 37

The Fairest Of Them All: The Beauty Of God's Daughters

Hannah Giselbach

I have always been fascinated by the life of Job. The fact that God took a regular guy, allowed Satan to send him through the worst physical, mental, and emotional torture imaginable, then set him back on his feet and never explained why (as far as we know), has always left me astonished and dumbfounded. I have often tried to put myself in his shoes and try to imagine what it must have felt like not only to lose my physical well-being (to the point of near-death), but also to lose my family, my home, and my livelihood. Doubtless, any one of the hardships Job had to face would devastate me with overwhelming grief and likely shake my faith. Job had to experience enough suffering to drive him literally insane, and yet he held on tightly to the only thing he knew to be true, solid, and reliable: his God. Reading about this account elicits some serious self-examination on the part of the reader. It is a fascinating, thought-provoking study.

One of the things that intrigues me the most about this story is the role family plays. Consider the blessings taken from Job: his house, his children, his sheep, his cattle, his crops, his servants, his camels, and his health. Among all of these tragic losses, only one category was truly irreplaceable: his children. God gave Job the exact number of children he had before, and yet I cannot help thinking how difficult it would be for Job to look into the eyes of his “new” children and not dwell on the excruciating memories of the children he lost.

The topic given me is about the beauty of Job's daughters. When I heard the topic, my mind immediately went to the daughters who died when the house crashed down on them, not the "new" daughters. But notice the passage is talking about the daughters God gave Job after the testing period had passed:

Now the Lord blessed the latter *days* of Job more than his beginning; for he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand female donkeys. He also had seven sons and three daughters. And he called the name of the first Jemimah, the name of the second Keziah, and the name of the third Keren-Happuch. In all the land were found no women so beautiful as the daughters of Job; and their father gave them an inheritance among their brothers. (Job 42:12-15)

Allow me to divide my thoughts on the topic into four main points.

Who Were These Girls, And Why Should They Matter To Me?

Although the extent of the information given us about these young women is contained in only three sentences, those sentences speak volumes if one truly examines the passage. The first chapter of Job tells us nothing about Job's seven sons and three daughters pre-tragedy. Nor does it tell us anything about the seven sons that acted as the replacement for the seven sons lost. The inspired writer made it a point, however, to mention the three "new" daughters by name and to tell us that their beauty was unmatched by any other women in the land. He also mentioned that the daughters received, apparently, the same amount of inheritance as their brothers.

I find it rather ridiculous when people make statements about how the Bible universally glorifies the man and undervalues the woman. Obviously, as is evidenced in this short passage, God

cherishes and elevates women. The sons here are not even mentioned except for the fact that they exist, while the women are mentioned by name and their beauty is celebrated. These girls were special.

Not only does God treasure women (every bit as much as He values men), but He also has a deep appreciation for beauty—rightfully so, since He created it. Here, He sang the praises of the attractiveness of Job's daughters. I believe, however, that the beauty was not only skin-deep. Based on what we know about Job's faith, doubtless he was an incredible father, and the values he instilled in his daughters must have been profoundly solid. Notice how seriously Job took his responsibility as a father at the beginning of the book:

And his sons would go and feast *in their* houses, each on his *appointed* day, and would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings *according to* the number of them all. For Job said, "It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did regularly. (New King James Version, Job 1:4-5)

That kind of committed, focused devotion to preparing your children for eternity is almost unheard of in today's society, and evidently in that day as well, considering the number of unwaveringly committed that came to God's mind when speaking to Satan was not a list, but a solitary man (Job 1:8).

How many fathers rise up every morning with a fervent prayer that just in case their children sin unwittingly today, God will forgive them, mentioning each child by name? Job was not just saying a routine morning prayer. He was rising early to build a sacrifice—a burnt offering of mournful repentance for the unknown sins of his children. He clearly wanted nothing more than to go to heaven and

take his children with him. That kind of commitment denotes a daily practicality in child-rearing—a never-ending perusal of producing happy, God-fearing, responsible, loving adults.

Doubtless, these daughters of Job were passionate about living for God just as their father was. Otherwise, I doubt very much that God would draw attention their beauty. God finds a beautiful face and an ugly, sin-filled heart to be a disgusting, despicable combination (Pro. 11:22).

Preparation For Parenthood

Job's period of agonizing hardship doubtless motivated him in ways we cannot imagine to make the very most of the new life God had given him. I am certain it produced immeasurable determination in the heart of Job to be the most Godly husband, friend, neighbor, and father he possibly could be. The first-hand knowledge that at any moment your children could be taken from this life in an instant is enough to obsess relentlessly over what it means to be a Godly parent. In other words, if he was not a concerned parent before (and he was), he certainly was after the piteous deaths of his first children.

There is no way to be prepared for parenthood in the same way Job was. We can, however, be prepared by the same God. Our preparation for parenthood can, and should, come through revelation, not experimentation. What that means is that we, unlike Job, have in our hands a letter from the Father telling us how He expects us to prepare our children for eternity. We have multiple examples of people of God who raised their children in the Lord. God has given us all the tools we need. We just have to take the initiative to use those tools. It means we, like Job, diligently pray for our children, even unborn children of the future, on a daily basis,. It means we are people of the Word, studying to show ourselves approved unto God (King James Version, 2 Tim. 2:15). It means that we decide early on that the definition of true success is and always will be living your life and going to heaven. Nothing else matters. From the beginning of our children's lives, this concept needs to be chiseled into their pliable hearts.

Beautiful Children In Today's World

True today, and to a degree probably was in Job's day, as well, beautiful children have a particularly difficult journey as Christians. Do not misunderstand me. All children *are* beautiful. After all, God says about children,

Behold, children *are* a heritage from the Lord.
The fruit of the womb *is* a reward. Like arrows
in the hand of a warrior, So *are* the children
of one's youth. Happy *is* the man who has his
quiver full of them; They shall not be ashamed,
But shall speak with their enemies in the gate.
(Psa. 127:4-5)

You should believe your children are beautiful—they are a gift from God. Realistically, however, especially beautiful children (by the world's standards) are going to come with extra temptations. What are some of those extra temptations for beautiful children?

The Temptation Of Pride

The world wants you to believe that with beauty comes special privileges. Popularity, attention from the opposite sex, etc., are all reasons to think more highly of oneself than one should (Rom. 12:3).

The Temptation To Be Immodest

Naturally, when you have a body that is attractive by the world's standards, it only makes sense to want to show it off. Especially during the summer months this is true. Choosing to dress modestly will undoubtedly make you a peculiar people (KJV, 1 Pet. 2:9).

The Temptation To Be Lascivious

Lasciviousness is one of those cryptic King James words that you find in the works of the flesh list found in Galatians 5:19-21:

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which
are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness,
lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred,
variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions,

heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Notice at the end of the passage the words *and such like* meaning that not only people who participate in this list, but also people who do things *like* the things in this list cannot enter heaven. Now, to that word lascivious. In the original Greek, one of its definitions is as follows: “indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females.”

If that is not a perfect one-line description of high school dances, I am sure I do not know what is. And who is it that is always expected to be in center of that arena moving seductively to the music playing in the dark high school gymnasium? The pretty girls. The first girls asked to prom, the girls peppering Facebook with pictures of them in their low-cut shimmering prom dresses. These girls, whether they mean to be or not, become the embodiment of lasciviousness when they participate in these kinds of activities. Mothers beware: This will be one of the most intense temptations your pretty daughter will face.

The Temptation To Be Involved in Immoral Activities

The high school dance will not be the only event your daughter will be expected to attend. Attractive girls will be invited and expected to participate in a myriad of activities that will glorify their popularity and sex appeal. They will be the first ones invited to parties where alcoholic beverages are being served. They will be the first girls desired to join the cheerleading squad, which requires girls to dress immodestly while moving their bodies in a lascivious way, inciting lust of male onlookers.

The Temptation Of Fornication

Obviously, if all of the previous points are true, the temptation of fornication will likely come into play. Our daughters need extensive teaching from their mothers, grandmothers, and others who

love God about the dangers of giving away their sexual purity and about how to avoid those situations in which temptation will be the fiercest.

The Temptation Of Eating Disorders

According to the National Eating Disorder Association, as many as 10 million females are fighting a life-and-death battle with an eating disorder such as anorexia or bulimia. Millions more are struggling with binge eating disorder. Eighty percent of American women are dissatisfied with their appearance. For females between fifteen to twenty-four years old who suffer from anorexia nervosa, the mortality rate associated with the illness is twelve times higher than the death rate of ALL other causes of death. Anorexia nervosa has the highest premature fatality rate of any mental illness.

A few more chilling statistics:

- Over one-half of teenage girls and nearly one-third of teenage boys use unhealthy weight control behaviors such as skipping meals, fasting, smoking cigarettes, vomiting, and taking laxatives.
- Girls who diet frequently are 12 times as likely to binge as girls who do not diet.
- 42% of 1st-3rd grade girls want to be thinner.
- 81% of 10 year olds are afraid of being fat.
- The average American woman is 5'4" tall and weighs 140 pounds. The average American model is 5'11" tall and weighs 117 pounds.
- Most fashion models are thinner than 98% of American women.
- 46% of 9-11 year-olds are "sometimes" or "very often" on diets, and 82% of their families are "sometimes" or "very often" on diets.
- 91% of women recently surveyed on a college campus had attempted to control their weight through dieting; 22% dieted "often" or "always."
- 95% of all dieters will regain their lost weight in 1-5 years.

- 35% of “normal dieters” progress to pathological dieting. Of those, 20-25% progress to partial or full-syndrome eating disorders.
- Twenty-five percent of American men and 45% of American women are on a diet on any given day.
- Americans spend over \$40 billion on dieting and diet-related products each year.

This evidences the sick obsession our culture has with outward beauty. To so many, it is perfectly worth it to sacrifice one's physical health and well-being to achieve the title of “thin.”

What is tragic is that Christian young women are certainly no exception to this temptation. On the contrary, the devil is insanely active at making sure the media, the schools, and the friends are pounding into the brains of your teenage daughters that if they are not pretty, they are not important. It is a travesty, but it is reality. Especially if your daughter is pretty and has a perfectionist, organized type-A personality, please beware of these forces at play with their hearts. It can so easily transition from a subtle desire to an obsession to addiction before you have even noticed.

How Can We Stress Inward Beauty Instead of Outward Beauty?

God does not have anything against physical beauty. He created it. In fact, He points out the physical beauty of great characters of faith from time to time in His Word—people like Joseph, Sarah, and Esther come to mind. Song of Solomon repeatedly sings praises to physical beauty in a sexual relationship between a husband and a wife. God does not want us to stop caring about looking our best. The scriptures even show God commanding that certain additions be made to the clothing of the priests for the sole purpose of beauty: “For Aaron's sons you shall make tunics, and you shall make sashes for them. And you shall make hats for them, for glory and beauty” (Exo. 28:40).

It is important to make a good first impression with the people we meet and in evangelistic efforts and trying to look our best is a big part of that. What God hates, and what is the biggest struggle for

girls today, is when a person focuses all her attention on outward beauty and neglects making sure her soul—the most important part of her—remains beautiful. The world wants to make you believe that it does not matter what you look like on the inside as long as you look good on the outside. God opposes this mindset while talking directly to married women in 1 Peter 3:1-6:

Wives, likewise, *be* submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct *accompanied* by fear. Do not let your adornment be *merely* outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on *fine* apparel—rather *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible *beauty* of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.

God is saying several things here about the value in possessing inner beauty. For one, He is saying that heathen men can be won over into salvation by the conduct of their kind, submissive wives. He is also saying that a gentle and quiet spirit makes you precious in God's eyes. He shares the same sentiments in some other passages. He prizes spiritual beauty as something worth far more than rubies (Pro. 31) and is sure to let us know that the part of us God looks at is the heart (1 Sam. 16:7). He wanted us to know in Proverbs 31:30 that beauty fades away but that a woman who fears the Lord shall be praised. Therefore, the emphasis in our homes needs always to be on beauty of a spiritual nature rather than physical.

This kind of thinking is anti-culture on so many levels. It is no simple task to remain in a state of nonconformity to society, especially since the media has saturated all of us with this essential quest to find the right “look.” While it is a natural instinct of women to try to look our best, we must find a balance.

As a disclaimer, let me just insert here that I know the issues surrounding a desire to be physically perfect are complicated and dangerous. I know so many girls who carry demons with them throughout the teen years, college years, and throughout womanhood—demons including eating disorders, self-mutilation, personality disorders, suicidal temptations, and addictions to promiscuity that all are linked back to childhood feelings of physical inadequacy. If I could have it my way, girls would never ever experience this because they would allow the health of their self-esteem to be controlled by the One who died for them.

Let us be as practical as possible in this quest. What are some ways that mothers can instill in their daughters a burning desire to be inwardly beautiful while deemphasizing the need to feel outwardly beautiful?

Girls need compliments. We thrive on them. But when you remind your daughters of how beautiful they are, you should always try to include a compliment about the beauty of their hearts as you are complimenting their physical beauty. Your girls need constant reminders of what is truly important. If it takes saying the silly grandmotherly statements we laugh about, say them. “Pretty is as pretty does” will someday make a true impact on your daughters if not today.

Avoid beauty contests at all costs and at all ages. Am I saying beauty pageants are sinful? No. I am saying, however, that these types of competitions place all the emphasis on physical beauty and little, if any, on inward beauty. This kind of contest can be deadly to your daughter’s self-esteem and focus as a Christian.

Never allow yourself or anyone else to make comments to your daughter like, “You sure are getting chubby” or “Wow, you’ve really been gaining weight.” If your daughter’s health is at risk, that is a

different matter. If not, this is the last thing your daughter needs to hear if you want her to care more about the soul than the body.

If your daughters are little, try to keep them that way as long as possible. Do not allow your preschool and elementary age girls to wear the Britney Spears/Hannah Montana looks. Is her little body developed enough to incite lust? Of course not. What you are aiming for by avoiding this look is keeping your daughters looking sweet and childlike for as long as you can. This will keep that desire to look “hot” at bay for longer.

Say NO to the tanning beds. Way too much has been documented about the dangers of melanoma complications for you to have to second-guess this. Once your daughters start going, it will become a kind of addiction and it will be very difficult for them to ever stop paying by the month for a celebrity color and a likely skin cancer diagnosis when they are older.

Set rules at your house about ages appropriate for womanly changes like ear piercings, high heels, make-up, etc., and stick with it! I remember in my home, I was allowed to start with foundation and powder at age 13, lip color at 14, and eye make-up at 15. Had I been given the works at age 13, I think the world would have been dealing with a very Tammy Faye little teenage Hannah. Protect the innocent “look” of your daughters for as long as you can without ostracizing them in society.

Have a zero-tolerance policy in your home about making fun of anyone for not wearing brand-name clothing or for looking unfashionable. This should always be unacceptable. For a crash course on this, pull out James 2 with your kids and talk about it as practically as you can until it sinks in. Again, make sure your kids are constantly reminded of what kind of beauty really counts.

Do not just pray that this kind of thinking will exist in the hearts of your kids when you are praying alone. Pray in front of your children that they will always remember the things that are truly important—that they will always remember that what matters above everything else is that they are beautiful in the sight of God, Who just sees the heart.

Teach your daughters about immodesty before it becomes an issue. Remember that virgin girls have no idea what makes clothing immodest, but you mamas who are married understand the visual temptations of men and owe it to your daughters to help them understand that as best you can. Godly daddies are desperately needed during the teen years to help daughters decipher between modest and immodest clothing.

Severely limit television in your home. If you are looking for the number #1 influence on the worldly thinking that physical beauty trumps everything else, you have found it in the cable you bought for your family's television set. Do not let your kids have televisions in their bedrooms unless you intend to monitor when they watch it and what they are watching closely. As for my husband and me, we have made the decision not to buy cable. We have a Roku so that we can listen to Pandora and watch Netflix and Hulu when we are in the mood, but TV is not just background noise at our house because we want to avoid being like the families who never turn it off and do not pay attention to what our kids are watching. At the risk of sounding old-fashioned, we believe that the devil, through the media, has kids right where he wants them when they are exposed to hours of television every day.

Do not order teen magazines for your girls, unless they are Biblically based. Take a quick look at a *Seventeen* or *Teen Vogue* and you will know why after about a minute.

If you realize your daughter is slowly morphing into the "worldly girl" in the way that she looks, carefully consider placing her in private school or home school if you are not already doing so. I have spent the past two years teaching in a public high school and I see every day just how much kids are pressured to fit a certain materialistic, worldly mold or they are quickly considered "weird." Remember it is the parents' responsibility to make the difference for their daughters' character in the home.

When your daughter is old enough to make a little money (whether it be a lemonade stand, babysitting, fast food or retail), have a sit-down talk with her about responsible ways to save and spend

money, instead of enabling her to blow it all on unneeded clothes, frills, cosmetics, or electronics.

Consider taking your daughter on a mission trip to a third-world country. I cannot think of a single instance in my life when I felt more struck by just how materially blessed I am as when I did mission work in the poverty-stricken rural areas of Jamaica. At 14 years old, I remember coming home, walking in my bedroom that was bigger than many of the houses I had just left behind in Jamaica and just crying because of how unfair it seemed that I should be so rich. According to most of the world's standards, my family was not wealthy, but seeing the way people in other areas of the world live puts everything into perspective. Many times, I remember coming home from another country and just feeling so silly for ever focusing on material things in the past. Every girl should experience something similar.

The best suggestion I have for every Christian mother and daughter is to spend time and time and more time together. God-fearing mothers who have their daughters' best interests at heart will want to sacrifice as much quality time as it takes to sway them in the direction of selfless Godliness rather than worldly materialism.

Our girls today need constant reminders of the kind of beauty our God values the most. It is my prayer that the mothers and future mothers in the church will take this challenge for what it is: a grave responsibility.

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CHAPTER 38

With Friends Like These, Who Needs Enemies?

Maggie Colley

Friends! They are defined as: “1. A person whom one knows well and is fond of; intimate associate; close acquaintance; applied loosely to any associate or acquaintance, or as a term of address, even to a stranger. 2. A person on the same side in a struggle; ally; opposed to foe. 3. A supporter or sympathizer; as a friend of labor” (“Friend”). We all know those who have been our friends and have been with us during difficult times to help us and have so acted as to lighten life’s burdens. Someone said one time, “You can count all your true friends by the fingers on one hand.” Only in adversity can one learn how priceless a loyal friend is! It seems that women need each other more than men need each other. Women share problems, the needs of children, and the care of the home. These are friends that we can laugh with or cry with, and who can sympathize with us! There is no substitute for friends like these who are sensitive to each other’s needs!

Job Had Friends

Job’s friends had come from distance places. They came when they heard of his difficulties. Job was at the height of all Hebrew glory, with wealth, health, and pleasant family associations, along with honor and prestige. He had ten children, seven of which were boys; three were girls. He was a man perfect and upright. So much so that with holy pride, the Lord Himself said: “There is none like him in the earth” (American Standard Version, Job 1:8).

All in one day he lost everything that he had counted precious in life! When Satan caused the loss of his family, his wealth, and his

honor among men, Mrs. Job said, “Dost thou still hold fast thine integrity?” (Job 2:9). As poor Job sat in grievous pain, scratching himself with a broken piece of pottery, “with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown” (Job 2:7), his wife who could perhaps hurt him most said, “Renounce God, and die” (Job 2:9). He answered correctly when he said, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (King James Version, Job 1:20-22). Then Satan used the wife of Job, when she urged him to commit suicide! Once He had all of earth’s blessings and the favor of God, but now he is facing the most difficult time of his life.

God said to Satan, “Hast thou considered my servant Job? For there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God, and turneth away from evil” (Job 1:8).

Satan retorted,

Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath, on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will renounce thee to thy face. (Job 1:9-11)

The great man Job probably had many friends and acquaintances. However, at a time like this, he certainly needed true friends. Prosperity makes friends, and adversity tests them. Only when we are down with a lingering illness and in total despair can we know how much true friends mean to us.

What Job’s Friends Did Right

Three prominent friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, came to comfort Job. They came when they heard of his plight. The Bible says they came and sat with him. They are to be commended for honestly trying to render consolation. They “made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and comfort him” (KJV, Job 2:11). They

were very grieved when they saw him, and “knew him not!” “They rent everyone his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven” (Job 2:12). They at first did not recognize him as the friend they had formerly known! They did come and “sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great” (Job 2:13). They sat in silence with him and felt so sorry for him!

What Job’s Friends Did Wrong

Finally Job’s three friends assumed that Job’s suffering was a direct result of personal sin. Jesus put an end to the notion of the Jews that all suffering was due to personal sin. He prepared his disciples by their witnessing the healing of the blind man in the city of Jerusalem (John 9:1-5). There was, however, a problem with what these men were saying. At least three times in the book of Job, we read that Job was an upright man of integrity whose life pleased God. And because the three of them did not understand Job, they came to some very wrong conclusions about God and about why He sometimes allows suffering in the world. Job’s friends falsely accused Job of sin in his life. From the book of Proverbs we learn, “They that are of a froward heart are abomination to the Lord: but such as are upright in their way are his delight” (KJV, Pro. 11:20). Though their intentions in coming to Job were good, their understanding of the situation was incorrect. “With friends like these, who needs enemies!”

The Word *Friend* Is a Precious Word

We all need friends in times of trouble and in moments of joy. Friends give us roots. Friends give us loving acceptance. Friends help us bear our burdens. Friends complete that which is lacking in our personalities. The right kind of friends helps us grow spiritually. Friends heighten our joys. It would be a dark and lonely world indeed without friends. We can be in the midst of hundreds of people – and still be lonely if we have no friends present. Robert Louis Stevenson said, “So long as we love, we serve. So long as we are loved by others, I would almost say we are indispensable; and no man is useless while

he has a friend.” If you want an accounting of your worth, count your friends. Only in adversity can one learn how priceless a loyal friend can be to us. As Job was living in the shadow of death, he begged for sympathy and understanding from his friends (Job 19:21-22). He needed them more than ever before!

People Need People

We live in a disposable society. Sadly, the people we love the most come and go: children grow up, parents die, siblings are separated by distance. But the right kind of friends are the continuous threads that help hold our lives together and give it meaning. We glorify God by developing Christian friendships. The example of Jesus provides five helpful hints on developing sweet spiritual friendships that will help us go to Heaven.

1. Jesus chose carefully His friends (John 15:12-16).
2. Jesus showed His friends that He was important in their lives and that everyone needs to be loved (John 1:37-39).
3. Jesus left hurts from past relationships behind (Mark 3:21-22; Mark 3:31-35).
4. Jesus and His friends had a mission (John 11:7-16).
5. Jesus was inclusive and supportive of His friends (Mark 9:33).

Paul made it evident that “evil companionship corrupts good morals” (1 Cor. 15:33).

The Cost Of Friendship

Just as it costs to be a Christian (Mat. 16:24-25), even so it costs to have friends. A friend is an intimate associate in whom we place our trust. We cannot help but think of the friendship of Jonathan and David. They became close friends while Saul, Jonathan’s father, was the king. The soul of David was knit with the soul of Jonathan, and Jonathan loved David as his own soul (1 Sam. 18:1). When Saul became very jealous of David, Jonathan began then to find ways to

save David's life. David lamented Saul's death because of his respect for the office of God's choice to make Saul king. The supreme test of friendship is found in Jesus words in John 15:13: "Greater love hath no man that this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." There will always be a cost of friendship which we must be willing to pay.

Here is the problem:

1. Choosing the right kind of friends (1 Cor. 15:33).
2. Going to the "trouble" of making friends.
3. Keeping friends after they are made friends.
4. Being the kind of friend that you would want others to be to you (Mat. 7:12).

A Friend Is Then One Of The Necessities Of Life

Friends are like:

1. Bread for a hungry appetite;
2. A balancing pole for walking the tight-rope of life;
3. Like a soothing ointment for the cuts and bruises of life;
4. Like a golden link in the chain of life;
5. Like a vine that clings to us despite our weaknesses.
6. The wise man Solomon said, "Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go. Lest thou learn his ways and get a snare to thy soul" (KJV, Pro. 22:24-25).

Hence, we need to be careful whom we choose for our friends! Our selection of friends should never be based on wealth, education, prestige, or only what they can do for us. We should select each friend by the character of the person—regardless of their status in life. How we can keep our friends is not that difficult to learn. When they are having a time of misfortune, poverty, trouble, sickness, or the loss of a loved one, we should be there for them. By this action, we assure the fact that they will also be there for us in our difficult times. "A friend loveth at all times" (Pro. 17:17). We should not

be “fair-weather” friends, nor choose those who are known to be that kind of friends. These are “friends” that are good at being a friend, until you really need a friend! They are like a shadow that walks by your side in the sunshine, but disappears when the clouds come. If we have this kind of “friends,” we will not need other enemies. We should not look for our friends to flatter us, nor should we give compliments that are meaningless. If a friend kindly corrects me, or reproves me when I am wrong, I should receive that as constructive criticism (Gal. 4:16). A real friend will tell us the truth about any subject.

Holding Our Friends

We want to suggest five ways of making and keeping our friends:

1. We must show ourselves friendly (Pro. 18:24). (Even a dog without reading books knows how to make friends and influence people by just being friendly!)
2. We must show an interest in the friends we meet.
3. We must not be cold or sour, which is a poor example of Christianity.
4. We must realize that our visitors, who may be future friends, may judge us and the church of Christ by our example.
5. We must treat even strangers correctly who visit our worship services.

We need to ask ourselves after each service of the church, “If I had been a stranger in the audience, would I want to return?” If we only concern ourselves with our own family and friends, and do not make these visitors welcome, we have done them a disservice and they may never return. This demands humility which every Christian should possess. Have we treated them so as to cause them to want to again attend our services? Our main interest should be how we can help and influence more friends for the Lord. Tokens of our interest and love in the gifts that we give are wonderful ways of keeping our

friends. Written notes of appreciation are very important to keeping our friends. It takes time to be a friend!

Conclusion

One of the tenderest narratives to be found anywhere, is found in our Lord's words in Luke 10:30-37, the account of the good Samaritan. Though the wounded man in need would have not spoken with kindness to the Samaritan, still he showed himself friendly by taking care of the man's needs. Jesus said, "Go thou and do likewise." Job found his friends to be discouragers instead of encouragers. When we have "friends" like this, we certainly do not need enemies!

It is interesting to note, that God restored unto Job more than he lost! His friends were forgiven, and Job prayed for them (Job 42:12-17). This is a great example for all living in the world today.

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