

Job's Wife

Job: View From The Ashes

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This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the book of Job 1 and 2. The book of Job immediately precedes probably much the middle section of your Bible known as the book of Psalms, and if you're here as a guest or visitor this morning, it may seem somewhat odd or strange to you that here on a day that we celebrate those that have been maternal in our lives, have been influencers in our lives, those that have shaped our lives, why would it be that we would go to a book of the Bible that is really not known for celebrating as much as it is for suffering? I want to invite you on a journey that we've been on for a few weeks now through the book of Job to look at this character, one who's very well-known by name, we know him as one who went through great hardship and pain and issues and such, but as we walk through it in a very systematic way, we're discovering, as always, there's always more to the story. So it may seem a little odd that we would be in the book of Job on a day that we identify as Mother's Day but when I share with you what we're about to talk about, you may think it's a little bit dangerous, we're going to talk about Job's wife today. Okay, it's all right to jeer. It's okay. In fact, when I've shared with people this morning as they walked on campus that this was the subject matter, I've gotten a lot of interesting looks. I mean, after all, a great theologian years ago called Job's wife the devil's accomplice. And yet today do you really think it is justice to judge one person by 10 words out of 42 chapters? You see, today we're going to look at what his wife said but we're also going to look in the context of the totality of the book of Job, the story, and here's my goal and desire, I want to peel the layers away today and I want to look at her in much the same light that we did Job a couple of weeks ago, I want to look at the woman that she was, I want to look at the myths behind this famous statement that she makes, and then I want to look at the legacy that she and Job have for us within the book.

So today in Job 1, we're going to begin in verses 20 through 22, then we're going to skip over to chapter 2, verses 9 and 10, and I want to read the accounts for you of how Job and Job's wife respond immediately after the first and the second wave of persecution. Let me remind you there's a time she responds and there's a time that she does not. Chapter 1, verse 20 says,

20 Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, 21 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. 22 In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

The next wave of persecution will be to his personal detriment. He will have sores on his body from the bottom of his feet all the way to the top of his head, and this is where we have those famous 10 words. Beginning in verse 9,

9 Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die. 10 But he said unto her, 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.

So let's look at Job's wife as the character and the person that she was prior to this famous statement being made, and I want to address her like we did Job a couple of weeks ago. What was her standing with God, and maybe more importantly for today, what was her state with God? How did she stand with God? What's interesting is outside of these 10 words there's really nothing negative spoken of her in the context of the book of Job. This is important because when you get to chapter 41 and 42, the three friends that we will address next week, not only does the Lord tell them exactly what he thinks about them, he calls on them to repent, he calls on them to come and to present themselves not only before the Lord but for Job to forgive them, and yet there's no record of Job's wife being commissioned to do the same.

In chapter 1 it says that Job having 10 children with him and his wife, that there was a day where his children had a celebration, seven boys, three girls. They're in their house and they're eating and drinking and they're having just a festive time and it says that Job went and he prayed for them lest at some point maybe they have sinned against God. Now why is this important? Because at no point in chapter 1 or following do we ever see Job saying, "I need to pray for my wife, it's possible that she has sinned against God." Even the passage we read where he said, "You speak as one of the foolish women," we'll deal with that in a moment, he never says, "You know what? Kind of like the boys, I need to pray for you." In fact, what we discover is we don't have a whole lot about her but we don't have any evidence anywhere in scripture where the Lord asked her to repent or Job acknowledged that he needed to pray for her because of her sin.

That's her standing. Let's talk about her state. Go back to chapter 1, verses 20 through 22. "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. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." Let me share with you what's just happened: his entire fortune has been vaporized. All of his influence is gone. His reputation is shot. And more importantly, 10 children, seven boys and three girls, all of which have lost their life.

Now we made a big deal about this last week that there's a time frame between chapters 1 and 2. We don't know if it was as small as one week or as large as a year, we'll deal with that more in just a moment. What we know is this, that at some point before chapter 2, verse 9, this woman who birthed 10 children that we know of, this woman who weaned 10 children that we know of, this woman who raised, who educated, who disciplined, who shaped, who molded, who made them what they were did not preside over one funeral, did not preside over two funerals, she presided over 10 funerals of her own children and there is no mention of anything negative coming from her mouth. Think about that not just ladies but gentlemen. Imagine if there was ever a time where we should have heard something vile come out of her mouth, it should have been at the end of chapter 1, right? In fact, there's an old statement that momma is never happier than her least happy child. Guys, that'll preach, trust me. Think about it, it's not about a least happy child, it's all of her children and yet there's no record of any vile statement, there's no record of her coming out and "cursing God," there's nothing of the sort. In fact, what do you have at the end of chapter 1? She's silent. There's no words which leads us to this great myth. I want to talk about verse 9, these 10 words that she speaks. What's behind them? What does she actually say? What's the reason? Because her entire legacy for 2,000 years of what we know as the church of Jesus Christ has been based on these 10 words and can we all agree that she's typically put in a camp that is less than favorable?

What's the first thing she said? Verse 9 it says, "Dost thou still retain thine integrity?" What is she saying? She's saying unto Job, "In light of the fact that we lost our children, in light of the fact that we've lost our property, our finances, our reputation, and now that you are sitting basically in the landfill of our community, you have open sores from the bottom of your foot all the way to the top of your head, dost thou still retain thine integrity?" Here's what she's saying, "Do you really believe that you haven't done something wrong? Do you really believe that you're innocent? Do you really believe that when it comes to your state and your standing with God, you are exactly where you need to be?" I want you to notice what Job's response is. Verse 10, "he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women." Some of your Bibles will say "like one of the foolish women." Now I was not an English major in college but I do know this, that when you make a statement with "as, and, or like" in it, it's called a simile. You're making a comparison. "My kids are as hungry as horses. Our wives are as thin as a twig." That's a good one, guys, use it occasionally. "He's as tall as a skyscraper." We use those statements to show extreme size, hunger, desire, whatever it may be. At no point do we ever think when we say that somebody is as something else do we actually equate them to whatever it is we're comparing them to; we're just simply making an exaggeration based on an observation. Why is this critical? Because what Job says, he does not call her a foolish woman, he says, "You speak as one of the foolish women." Isn't that interesting? We've vilified this woman for this famous statement and yet Job did not. Now we'll deal with it in a moment the particulars thereof but basically what he's saying is, "Honey, you're speaking as someone who isn't wise." As someone, that's what he said, "You speak as or you speak like a foolish woman."

The second question is this, the "when." When did she make her statement? Now as you're reading through the book of Job, we have this first wave of persecution with all the

children and the finances, the second wave with his personal health, verse 9 and 10, she comes and says, "Doth thou retain thine integrity? curse God, and die." And then in verse 11, we'll deal with this next week, his three friends show up and, by the way, they began to berate him even in a more extreme manner than we may see even verse 9 of chapter 2. But here's what's intriguing: when you go over to Job 29, Job makes this statement to his friends – by the way, they're giving him a hard time, they're continuing to pour fuel on the fire – and he references in verse 2 of chapter 29 that he's been in this condition for months. Now why is that important? Because in verse 11 and 12 it says that Job's friends sit with him for seven days and then they have a series of dialog. Do you really believe that their dialog lasted for 90 days? Do you really think that these guys took that much time out of their life to simply berate him? In fact, we'll deal with that next week. But when Job says, "My condition has been for months," do you know what it opens up the possibility of? It opens up the possibility that when she made this statement that she made, it wasn't the first day she found him on the ash heap.

I want you to see the picture for just a moment. Day after day probably morning and night, this same woman who never said anything negative about her children losing their life continues to bring the balm, continues to bring the medicine. Here's the problem: he's not getting any better. There's nothing improving in his condition. We don't know, did she consult the doctors, did she consult those who are professional? All we know is this, that according to Job out of his own mouth he's been in this condition for months. Is it possible that when she made this very famous statement it wasn't the first hour or the first day or maybe even the first week, could it have been weeks down the road? I mean, after all, his friends, we get the idea didn't live around the corner but journeyed to where he was. This is important because this means that not only did she stay silent in the midst of losing her children, it's possible that she even facilitated the medical condition of her husband Job for a season of time, but there came a moment, there came a time where she said, "Enough's enough. Do you really believe that you sit here in innocence? Do you really believe that you've done nothing wrong? Why don't you just curse God and die?"

Can we talk about the "who"? This is an important question, in fact, it may be the most important question that we ask ourselves today in regards to this text. Who did she get that idea from? Go back to what Job said in verse 10, "You speak as one of the foolish women." I want you to think about the fact that Job's house, according to chapter 1, was no longer what it was. By the scope of her age she probably didn't have any parents that she could go and reside with. All of her children have lost their life. Her husband is on the dumpster pile outside the city gates. Who do you think she spent her days with? Who do you think she spent her time with? Well, it would have been those that would cry with her and mourn with her and walk through life with her. What does Job say? "You speak as one of the foolish women." Can I give you one of the greatest life lessons that we have from Job's wife? Being very careful whose advice, wisdom and instruction that you give attention to because he doesn't say, "You're foolish," he doesn't say, "You're unwise," he says, "Those you've been hanging out with are beginning to rub off on you."

I mean, imagine the scene. She leaves early in the morning. She goes to the ash heap. She helps nurse his wounds. She comes back and what do you think she comes back to?

Those individuals in the community saying, "Honey, do you really still believe in him? Do you still believe he is sinless? This has been going on now for days, for weeks, possibly even months. When are you going to wake up to the fact that your husband may not be the man you think he is?" Ladies, can I give you some wisdom today and, guys, this goes for you as well? When you're struggling in your marriage, when you're struggling in your home, when you're struggling with your children, when you're struggling with all that, do not give time and attention to people that would advise you contrary to what God's word says because we're vulnerable. And ladies, I'm going to go a step further and, guys, it reciprocates for us as well as husbands: ladies, if you're around other women who speak ill of your husband, get away from them. Get away from them. Guys, if you're around other guys that take cheap shots at your wife, leave their presence because if you spend enough time with people, guess what will happen? They'll start rubbing off on you and you'll start entertaining their thoughts.

You see, that's the "why." Job's wife was exhausted. I mean, think about it physically just how taxing her life would have been over the last months, maybe even years. Think about it emotionally. She's buried 10 of her children. She's lost her dreams and her husband, the love of her life, is in a precarious situation. Think about it mentally. Can you imagine the thoughts that would have gone on in her head? You know, there's an old statement, it's very wise: never make a life altering major decision in life if you're tired, hungry or both. By the way, can I just suggest don't make any decision in life if you're tired, hungry or both. I would daresay there might not have been anybody more exhausted on planet earth than Job's wife. You see, when she would come home at the end of the day, what would she hear? Voices. In our culture today we call it the chirping, right, people chirping at her. Can I put this in context? She's worn out. She sits down. She pulls out her phone and she goes to social media and she sees people calling out her own husband. You know, over time it'll wear you out and you know that our lives end up getting shaped by the voices that we hear the most. You know that's why we celebrate Mother's Day, because nobody spoke to us more than our moms, nobody said more times than anybody else, "Get back here!" Nobody else told us repetitively, "I brought you into this world, I'll take you out!" Think about it. Who's the one person in our lives that spoke the most? You know, that's why Mother's Day is such a big deal and I know Father's Day is coming and we oftentimes don't spend as much emphasis on that but let's be honest, rarely do any of us have a father figure that actually verbalizes more than a mother figure in our lives. You see, Job's wife was in a context where she was hearing bad false information. I want you to go back to verse 10, what does he say? "You speak as one of the foolish women." I think that's important. He recognized based on his journey, he had observed her behavior was changing, her tone was changing, her words were changing.

So let's talk about the legacy not only of Job's wife but of Job himself for once we turn to chapter 3, we never hear of her again directly, that is. In fact, you might be surprised today to discover that Job's wife is actually addressed personally two other places in the book of Job, both by the mouth of Job while he's dialoging with his friends. We make our way to chapter 19, verse 17, and Job is talking about how nobody wants to be around him, nobody wants to be a part of his life, everything is negative. He makes this statement – this is important – he says, "My breath is a stench to my wife." Now look at

that from both sides. 1. His wife is not pleasant in context. There is still this frustration, there's still this struggle, there's still these issues. If his breath is a stench, I think it's more than just the fact that he hadn't had a bath in months, I think it's the fact that they're still struggling with their context. But notice what he calls her: my wife. Notice he didn't say, "My breath is a stench to the one who used to be my wife, or to the one who's left me, taken off." In fact, he says, "My breath is a stench to my wife."

And here's the most critical one, Job 31:9 and 10. I'm not going to quote it or go read it, you feel free to do it for yourself because it's one of those passages in the Bible that's a little R rated, if you know what I mean. All of a sudden I heard more pages turning, isn't that funny how that works out? Chapter 31 is very important because chapter 31 is Job's last stand. In other words, he's been dealing with these three friends back and forth, back and forth, all kinds of accusations, all kinds of statements. When chapter 32 shows up, a guy named Elihu shows up. He speaks for about six chapters and God so reveres what he said God doesn't even address him, he just whips him and shows up in chapter 38. Chapter 31 is Job's last defense regarding everything that's been said to him and about him. In verse 9 of chapter 31, Job makes this statement and I'm going to paraphrase and clean it, so to speak. He says, "If I have cheated on my wife, if I have stepped out on my wife, if I have been unfaithful to my wife, then," verse 10, "she would have cause to go be with another man." Do you know what's interesting? We're at the end of the story as far as his friends are concerned and here's what he stands on, this is one of his last statements, "If y'all really think that I'm in sin, why is my wife still here? Why didn't she take off on me?" Because according to the law she had plenty of occasion, did she not? He said, "My wife would have gone and left me lest she had reason."

You see, when we talk about the legend of Job there's a lot of things to talk about. James 5 says the patience of Job. How about the legend of his wife? At the end of his famous struggle on the ash heap, he says, "My wife would have left me if there had been cause." Is it possible that over time and listening to the dialog she finally realized, "Yeah, he's not the man my friends said he was. He's not the one that people claimed he was. He's not the person that they hashtagged and ripped on social media." He calls her his wife in both of those passages and in chapter 31 he says, "You know what? If I've really sinned, she'd be with somebody else right now and she is not." You see, the legacy of his wife of patience is I think we've got some biblical evidence that she didn't just say 10 words and hit the road, she didn't just say her piece in verse 9 and say, "Enough's enough, I'm out of here." You get the idea throughout the course of his dialog with his friends that though it may be distance at times, there's still a relationship because he calls her "my wife."

Then let's talk about the prophetic. You know, when we talk about the prophetic that means that which is foreshadowed, that which is spoken of in advance not just in Job and his wife's life but in our life and even in the days to come. Today even though we're "in the early stages of walking through the book of Job," can we fast forward to chapter 42? You see, in chapter 42 we get all the bow put on the package and here's a man who loses his fortune, loses his family, loses everything, his friends turn their back on him, Elihu betrays him, then God comes and speaks in chapter 38 very clearly to him. When you get to chapter 42, God begins to "wrap the story up." He tells his three friends, "You were

wrong in your analysis. Repent and bring offerings." What does he do for Job? 1. Everything in chapter 1 that was of a material asset gets doubled, twice as much livestock, twice as much money. He is what we call doubly blessed in chapter 42 compared to chapter 1. But the end of chapter 42 ends in this very cryptic fashion that I want to allude to this morning. It says there that he has 10 children given to him by the Lord. Now it just so happens to be that these 10 children are of the same gender as the original 10 in chapter 1, seven boys and three girls in chapter 1, seven boys and three girls in chapter 42. Now there's a lot of different theories out there. One of the theories is that Job's wife hit the road and God blessed him with another woman to bear him these other 10 children but the Bible doesn't mention anything about another woman. Others would say, well, maybe his wife didn't abandon him and she had 10 other children. What woman at her age would say, "Yeah, that's a good idea, honey"? Nobody. And can I speak very frank? For those of us that have lost loved ones, we don't want a replacement, we want them. That's why we mourn. That's why we cry. It's not that I want another person to fill the role, I want the ones I lost. There's no mention of another woman. Job's wife, if she stayed around, was of such age. Is it possible, is it possible that God actually did in their life what he did in the widow of Naan's life where he raised her son, and Lazarus' sisters' lives where the Lord raised their brother? You know, the Lord is able to raise and it's possible. The numbers are the same. The genders are the same. The woman are not specifically mentioned. You say, "Jeff, where are you leading with Job's wife?" Because if the case is such that even though she said these famous 10 words, that in chapter 31 she believes him because she has not abandoned him, then what you see in chapter 42 is the picture of grace. Do you know what grace is? Getting what we don't deserve.

She is known for 10 vile words. Let me ask you a question: what are you known for? Do you ever go to a reunion and they can't get that story off their lips? You see somebody around town and you're always introduced as the one that did such-and-such. Isn't that interesting how that works? But grace is God giving us that which we don't deserve just because he loves us, he's good to us, and he's merciful. Is it possible that even though we don't hear words from her or see her openly again that God demonstrated grace? Today, you and I, it's so easy to throw the proverbial stones at the stained glass windows of Job's wife. How dare she say what she said. Guys, we've probably said worse. We've probably done worse in our eyes. But I've got good news for you, God is a God of grace. In fact, in 1 Peter 4 it says he has given grace unto all men as is needed. Today, we have celebrated the empty tomb because when we talk about a resurrected Jesus, it doesn't matter what statements we've made, actions we've done, even thoughts we've had, it means that he is able to still give us that which we don't deserve, forgiveness and salvation. Job's wife may be more known for her words but her story maybe better spoken of as the grace of God.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. Maybe this morning as we gather in this place or maybe even watching online, the Spirit of God took the word of God with a story that most of us know as having a prescriptive conclusion and maybe God flipped that proverbial script today in your life and showed you that in spite of what may have been or currently is, that he is a God of grace and forgiveness and love and compassion

and maybe today is the day. Romans 10:13 says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Maybe today is the day where in spite of what others think and have said or actions they've made, that you hear the voice of God alone. Maybe today is the day that you call out. It's not about jumping through a bunch of hoops, it's not about becoming "religious," it's not even about repeating what somebody may or may not say in the exact form. This is a heart's cry but maybe your heart's cry of grace would be something like this, "God, today I recognize much like Job's wife, I've had times in my life where I've spoken erroneously, God, I've had times in my life I've been places I shouldn't have been, I've thought things I shouldn't have thought. God, your word says that the result of the wages of my sin is death but your word also says but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord, and today I'm staking my forgiveness, I'm staking my eternity not on what I have or haven't done but on what Jesus Christ alone has done on my behalf. God, today I believe, I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he was willing to come on my behalf to live a sinless life on my behalf, to take the punishment of my sin on his cross and, God, yes, to raise from the grave three days later so that my sins could be forgiven and my soul could be saved. God, today I don't have all the answers to all the struggles, the issues and the problems of this life but there's one thing I do know, that, God, I have a sin problem, I have a rebellion problem that only Jesus Christ can fix. So the best way I know how, I'm confessing my problem and, God, I believe that Jesus Christ alone is the one who can save me and forgive me. Lord, I'm doing so to the best that I know how."

With your head still bowed and your eyes still closed, in just a moment I'm going to pray for us and we're going to stand and sing together in celebration and maybe you're that person who called out to the Lord saying, "God, I'm sinner. Save me." Maybe today is the day you step out and step forward, we've got a whole team of folks that would love to celebrate with you, to pray with you, just to hear your story.

Lord Jesus, as we come to this time of decision, thank you, thank you that even as today we studied one of those characters where we even question if grace could be possible, that, God, today we look at our own lives in the spiritual mirror and realize that your grace is truly amazing that you would save a wretch like us. God, thank you for your willingness to bestow love and compassion and forgiveness, Lord, even in spite of where we've been, who we've been with, what we've said and what we've thought. God, today may we cherish your grace and may we call out to you. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.