

Job Tells the Story about Job

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Bible Text: Job

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It has been a hard time. I don't know how many of you have experienced very hard days in your life. I certainly have. In fact, it is so hard for me to share a little of what I have experienced that I made myself a few notes. I hope you don't mind if I use them to just share a little bit of...to tell you the story.

First of all I have to say I was a very, very wealthy man. When I say wealthy I mean, I don't know how many of you are wealthy here today. Maybe some of you are. I don't know. Are there any of you here who are very, very wealthy today? I guess nobody. I was. I mean extremely wealthy.

Let me just tell you the story. I mean first of all I was wealthy in the blessings of family. Not only did I have a wife, but I had seven sons and three daughters. Can you imagine the blessing of that? All of those wonderful young people, but my wealth grew and grew and grew. I had 7000 sheep. I had 3000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen and 500 donkeys. I mean in my day that represented a tremendous amount of wealth.

It would be a lot like, let us say in your day if you have 15 homes and 20 Mercedes or whatever kind of automobile you would like to drive. We didn't have those in my day.

But I had so much. And I will tell you I honored God for the blessing that he had given to me and the joy of having so much. I praised him for it and I will be honest. I mean, I wasn't a perfect person, but I did everything I could to try to live a life that was a good life. I tried to do that which was good and I tried always to turn away from that which was evil. In fact, amazingly I came to be known for just that.

You know, wealth isn't everything. Sometimes we learn that the possessions that we have are not the most important things in our lives. And for some people the experiences that all that you have, all that you gain and all that you call your own can disappear in a moment of time. But I am going to tell you, my friend, everything you have and everything you gain will someday disappear in a moment of time.

There is an old saying. You probably heard it. "You can't take it with you." The time will come for each one of us as we leave this earth that what we have will not be ours. I hope all of you live in a lovely home. But, my friend, 100 years from now someone else will be living in that home, someone who may not even remember who you are.

All the wealth that you possess, when you leave this earth you won't take it with you. And I want to tell you, my friends, I experienced that. But, you know, I just loved my children so much. They were so much an important part of my life. Do you know what I used to do?

They would have a feast and they would celebrate and they would rejoice in all the things that God had given to them. And when the feast was over I would go and I would offer offerings to God and I would pray that God would bless them and God would keep them from evil and God would give them good things, encourage them and bless them. So that's what I wanted in their lives. That is what I wanted for them.

Well, let me introduce myself. I am just going on and on and on. I didn't tell you who I am. My name is Job. You may have heard of me. I understand that there is a book that you have in this day that tells my story. It is supposed to be a long book and you know that somebody has told me that in this big volume you have that you call the Bible, the book about me is the oldest book in that entire library written way before any of the other books. And, my friend, it tells my story.

Now I didn't know this, but later on I found exactly what was behind all the difficulties that I experienced in my life. There was a time when all the angelic beings came before the Lord God and the rebel, the evil one, the one we call Satan. You have heard of him, haven't you? You know who he is? He came before God. And I don't know why, but God chose to use me as an example to say...he said to him, "Have you considered my servant Job that there is no person as righteous on all the earth, that he always does the good and turns away from that which was evil?"

Satan, that old deceiver, that one who would destroy God if he could and certainly wanted to destroy me said to God, "But what do you expect of Job? You have given him everything? I mean look at this. He has all the cattle. He has a wonderful family. He has all these great blessings. Of course he praises you. But I will tell you, God. Take away what he has and he will curse you to your face."

I don't know why, but God took up the challenge. God said to Satan, "I will place Job in your hands. Do what you want. Just don't touch his body."

The next several days were what I thought to be the worst days of my life. You can't imagine what happened to me. I cry when I think of it. It was so horrible. All the oxen were plowing, the donkeys were feeding beside them and enemies of my people came and they took them and they slew all of the servants with the edge of the sword and only one of them was left and he came to tell me the story. They were all gone. All these animals that had been mine, all these hard working men who took care of the animals. They were all gone.

And while this man was still speaking to me, another one came and said that there was a big fire and it burned up all the sheep and it burned the servants and consumed them.

And he alone escaped from this terror to come and to tell me the story. My possessions were disappearing one by one, all that I had.

I remember sitting down and saying, “But, yet I still have a family. I love them and they love me.”

And just as I was thinking that another one came and said, “The Chaldeans, they came in bands and they raided on the camels and they took them and they slew the servants with the edge of the sword.” And he was the only one left to come and tell me the story.

That sounds like enough terror for one day, doesn't it? What do you think? Isn't that pretty horrible? Imagine in one day everything you have just disappearing. But that wasn't enough. That wasn't the whole story.

It's hard to tell you what happened next. It was terrible. Another one came and he said, “Your sons and your daughters, they were eating and drinking wine in the home of your oldest and a great wind came and the wind blew down the four corners of that house and they fell on the young people and they all died. And I was the only one left to come and tell you.”

They were all gone. All of my animals were gone. All of my possessions were gone. All of my children were gone.

My wife was discouraged, so discouraged that she said to me, “Job, just curse God and die. We have had enough.”

But in the midst of my pain, in the midst of the horror, in the midst of all that I had experienced, in the midst of losing all that was mine I still love God. I still honor him. I said, “Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I will return. The Lord gave. The Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

I didn't sin. I turned to God in the midst of the terror that I had experienced.

My friends, do you know what I found out? I didn't find this out until later, but all the angelic beings, once again, came before the Lord. And Satan was there also. Oh, that deceiver, that hater of men, that one who despised me. He said to God, “Ok, so Job is still honoring you. Touch his body and he will curse you to the face.”

I don't know why God did this, well, I didn't anyway at that time. But do you know what God said to Job? He said that I was in Satan's power, that he could inflict me with whatever he wished, only he could not take away my life.

Do you know what interested me in this? And I want you to understand this because it is one of the lessons that I learned. Satan could only do what God allowed him to do. God said at first, “Don't touch his body.” Satan wasn't allowed to do that and he couldn't

touch my body. Now he was allowed to touch my body, but he would have loved to put me to death, but God said, “No, you can’t take his life.”

Do you know it is the same in your life? Satan cannot go further than what God allows him to do. It’s a cause of comfort even in the midst of the pain.

Well, Satan was wrong. Even though he was going to afflict me it was not going to destroy me. He caused me to have boils all over my body.

Did you ever have a boil? I mean, some people say they have one on their finger and it is so painful they can’t stand it. Imagine boils all over the body. It is so painful. It is just a horror. I don’t know how I can describe it except to say the pain is beyond anything I can imagine.

My friends, I owned nothing. I went from being the wealthiest of men to the poorest. I went from being one with a beautiful and wonderful family, to one without a family. And here I was sitting, as it were, on a heap of ashes, on the ground, boils all over my body, picking up bits of pottery to scrape off the boils.

It was terrible. And there I sat. And there I was in pain. I wanted so much to honor God even in the midst of this incredible difficulty that I was experiencing.

So I said, “Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?”

I never cursed God, but, my friends, it was terrible. Can you imagine the pain? I want you to think back about what I experienced. I was a wealthy man and now I had nothing. I had had a beautiful family and now they were all gone. And here I was inflicted with boils all over my body, with pain unimaginable.

Well, a few of my friends came to comfort me. Did you ever have friends who came to comfort you and it probably would have been better to have enemies? Let me tell you the story.

Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, they came and they sat down to try to be a comfort to me. They sat on the ground with me and for seven days and seven nights they said nothing. That was the best thing they did. I want to tell you. If they had kept up like that it would have been a blessing. I mean seven days I had people there who cared.

Let me tell you something. Do you ever visit somebody who is sick, maybe it is in a hospital, maybe it is in a person’s home? I have had people say to me after this experience, they say, “What do I say to someone who is sick? What do I say to someone who is having a problem?”

My usual answer is, “Just keep quiet.”

Sometimes the best thing you could do is just to be there. I know what it is like. We want to find something to say. We want to find just the right words and sometimes the right words are keeping quiet.

Now my friends sat there. And they sat there and I was comforted. It was good that they just were with me. But it didn't last, my friends. They started thinking of their philosophies of life. Oh, I wish they had shut their mouths.

Do you know what they started telling me? They just paraphrased it. I am going to quote everything they said, but let me just tell you what they said to me, something like this. They said, "Hey, Job, you are being afflicted. Hey, Job, you have to have done something wrong. Yeah, I'm sure you were bad. You know, come on, Job does not punish people for nothing. If you are experiencing all this pain and all this angst you must have been a pretty bad guy. I mean we don't know anything bad about you. We don't know what you went through. We don't know what you have done in your life. I mean all we know is what we have heard about you. But only the bad receive evil from God."

Boy, that will make you feel good, won't it? I mean, with friends like that, I mean, you know...

As I said, "Who needs enemies?"

And they kept it up and kept it up and kept it up. And I was beginning to feel so depressed. I was beginning to feel as if life didn't have a meaning anymore. My best friends are telling me I have to be evil because God would not have punished me if I hadn't been evil.

What a day. What a day.

But do you know, my friends, no matter what they said, no matter what they did, I still trusted in God. God is good. No matter what happened in my life, God cared about me. I remember the words that I had said. "As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives and at last he will take his stand on the earth even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I will see God whom I shall behold and whom my eye shall see and not another."

I don't even know where those words of faith came from. I know they came out of my mouth. But they were difficult words to say. What was I saying, in essence?

Ok, God, it is terrible and, you know, I am in a position where I just may die from all of this. But no matter what happens to me in faith I believe that someday I will see my Redeemer. Someday though worms destroy this flesh in the grave, some day with these very eyes I will see God.

I don't know where that faith came from. It must have been a gift from God, but I believed for sure that I would see him some day.

Yet I sat there still on that pile of ashes, still with potsherds scarping the boils from my body. Finally I was so concerned I turned to God and I said, “Oh, that I might be able to find him, that I might come to his seat. I will present my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments.” I will come before God and I am going to say, “Why? Why am I experiencing all this? God, do I really deserve all this pain?”

I waited and my friends continued to taunt me and the time went by and finally God answered me. Yes, my friends. He answered me, but not in the way that I had expected. Out of the whirlwind I heard the very voice of God, but it wasn't at first the voice of comfort. Instead it was a voice of challenge. What did God say to me?

He said, “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?”

Do you know what that means? He was saying to me, “Who is this stupid guy who is talking?” That is what it meant. That is what it meant. “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?”

Here I am in a heap of ashes. Why did he speak to me like that?

He said, “Gird up your loins like a man. I will ask you.”

See I wanted to ask God. He was, “No, I am going to ask you and you are going to answer and you are going to tell me.”

And then God asked me some of the oddest questions that I have ever heard in my life. Do you know what God said to me? He said, “Hey, Job, where were you when I created the foundations of the world?”

“Huh? God, I wasn't born yet. What do you mean where was I? I wasn't there.”

And he goes on to say, “Tell me if you have understanding.”

I had no idea.

You know what else he said to me? He says, as if he were standing above and looking down he said, “Hey, Job, have you ever considered a mountain goat?”

“What? Did I ever consider the mountain goat? What are you talking about, God?”

And he started asking me whether I understood the birthing of animals. I was so confused. What in the world is God trying to say to me in all of this? What did it mean?

I pondered it. I thought for a long time and finally I began to understand what God was talking about. Yes, I had been a good man. Yes, I had honored him. Truly there was nothing in my life that should have caused the pain that I experienced. But I really didn't understand. I did not understand the reality of the fact that God is sovereign, that he is in

charge and that was the lesson that I needed to learn, that through all of these experiences, through all of the pain, through all of the difficulty God is the one who is control. And God is the one who makes us to understand the reality of life.

Do you understand that God is in control, that he is the sovereign one? I don't know what has happened in your lives. Maybe everything has been good. Maybe you are all very wealthy people who are sitting here, families and loved ones and friends. But maybe it is not so. Maybe you struggle from day to day to pay your bills. Maybe you have illness and difficulty and your lives and the lives of your family. The big lesson that you need to learn is the lesson that I learned, that God is the one who is in control and God is the one who can take the evil and make it good, can take the poor and make it rich.

Finally I said, "I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see you. Therefore I retract and I repent in dust and ashes." And when I say I repent it wasn't a repentance of some kind of evil. I really loved God all along. I repented of not understanding the reality of who God is, that he is the great one, that he is the powerful one. I learned my lesson. And do you know what God did? I have to tell you the truth.

I told you how I was rich. I told you how I became poor. I have told you how I became sick. I have told you about the pain and the torture that I experienced. But God who loves with an everlasting love restored my fortunes.

When did that happen? Do you know what I did? In the midst of all of this with these so called friends, I prayed for them. And as I prayed for them, God blessed me. He increased all that I had two fold, all of my brothers and sisters and all who had known me before came to me. They ate bread with me in the house and they consoled me and comforted me for all the adversities that I had experienced in my life.

God blessed my latter days more than my beginning and I tell you, my friend, through all that I experienced I praise God. Through all the difficulties and trials and pain I praise God. And I will tell you that my goal is to live the remainder of my life in a way that will bring glory and honor to him and I know that when I leave this life the day is still coming when I will seem my Redeemer and these very eyes will look upon him the one who loved me forever.

I want to ask you a question. You have been through trials in your life. Every one of us has. Do you love the Lord our Savior? Have you turned to him in faith believing in the midst of any trial that you have experienced? Oh, my friend. I hope you have. May it be that each one of us will be seeking each day of our lives to honor him and to love him because he is the one who through it all has loved with an everlasting love.

Thank you for listening to my story. Let us continue praising him.