

Lessons from the Book of Job

- A. Life doesn't always turn out the way we hope.
1. Job 29:14-20.
 - a. Job thought he would die in his own home after a long life—that his root would spread out to the waters, that dew would be on his branches all night, i.e., that he would remain strong, or maintain his vigor.
 2. How could he have ever imagined that his 10 children would be killed in one day, that he would lose all his possessions, that his health would completely fail, that he would lose the love and respect of seemingly everyone around him (see 19:13-22 for how forsaken he was).
 3. We know that Job's wealth was eventually restored, that he had more children, and that he did live a long life (ch. 42). But what an awful ordeal he experienced in the meantime!
 4. Have you read Job's long lamentation in chapter 3? Have you read some of his other speeches, especially the ones given when he was in the depths of despair? He went from having these hopes and dreams to wishing he had never been born.
 5. Folks, life may not turn for you the way you've always dreamed it would. You MAY be in for some really rough times.
 - a. We know at the very least that you will suffer for Christ's sake ("Yes, and all who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution"—2 Timothy 3:12).

- B. What we all need, in order to face the difficulties of life, is the patience (or perseverance) of Job, something for which is commended in...
1. James 5:11.
 2. He is commended, NOT because he never expressed pain and grief over His suffering—because He did; and NOT because he never questioned God, or complained against God—because He did (and he was rebuked for it).
 3. He is commended, because through it all, even when things were at their darkest, he remained steadfast in his relationship to God.
 - a. His response after the first wave of suffering: Job 1:20-22.
 - b. And his response after the second wave: Job 2:10.
 - c. His commitment to God is expressed in a number of other statements, but perhaps best in Job 13:15: “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him...”
 4. Life for Job became more difficult than probably any of us can imagine, but he steadfastly refused to abandon God.
- C. What we must learn, then, as Job did, is that first and foremost, we serve God because of who He is, and so if stripped of seemingly every earthly blessing, we will continue to serve Him faithfully.
1. Do you remember the exchange between God and Satan in chapter 1—the challenge Satan issued to God?
 - a. Read 1:8-12.
 2. Clearly, Satan didn’t know Job as well as he thought he did. Job silenced his accuser, because with this “hedge” removed, he still held fast to God.
 3. Remember, Job didn’t know anything about this behind the scenes action. He thought that God was against him, that God had made him His enemy, but what He didn’t realize is that God allowed Satan to do these things because He had confidence in Job.

4. God has blessed us with many things in this life, but what if they were all taken away? Would we still serve Him? Maybe Satan thinks the same thing about you that he thought about Job. Your task is to shut him up.
 5. Bottom line—God is worthy of our complete allegiance, even if we never have another “good” day on this earth.
- D. What this means, then, is that we must develop a deeper appreciation for the spiritual blessings God gives us, through Jesus Christ. These blessings are constant, if we continue to live by faith.
1. Yes, we understand that God rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked, but those rewards/punishments are not always evident in THIS life, at least not in our outward circumstances (despite what the “prosperity preachers” say).
 2. Job’s friends—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar—they all explained Job’s suffering in the same way. You are suffering, because you sinned. What you’re experiencing is what happens to the wicked.
 - a. But Job was right when he pointed out exceptions to this—Job 12:6; 21:7-13.
 3. As “unfair” as it may sound, sometimes the wicked fare better in this life than we do—if we just look at outward circumstances.
 4. So again, we must learn to more deeply appreciate our spiritual blessings.
 - a. To that end, it’s interesting that with all Job lost, you know what seemed to bother him most? His belief that God was against him, that God had made him His enemy. In other words, his fellowship with God is what mattered more to him than anything else.
 - b. And that should matter most to us—to know that I know Him, and He knows me, that I am in Him, and He in me.

5. Of course, the spiritual blessing which sustains us through whatever difficulty we face is the hope of eternal life. Certainly, there were times when Job despaired of hope, but other times when he expressed confidence that something much better was awaiting him.
 - a. Job 14:13-15.
 - b. Job 19:25-27.
 6. We've been given so much more revelation than Job concerning eternal life, so may we always cling to that hope, and do nothing to forfeit it.
- E. You may be a fine Christian now, but you can be better, and suffering may be just what you need to make you better.
1. Remember the statement God made about Job in 1:8—"there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil."
 2. Job was a great man before he suffered, but he was an even better man when the ordeal ended.
 - a. Job 42:5.
 - b. James 5:11 helps explain what Job "saw"—"the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful."
 3. What is clearly implied in God's speeches, in chs. 38-41, is that God's overruling providence over His creation is designed, not for man's harm, but for man's good.
 4. One thing's for sure—Job learned that he was in no position to ever question God, much less charge God with wrong (a point also made very strongly by Elihu).
 5. Job's trust in God was now deeper than it had ever been.
 6. The Book of Job does not resolve all the questions we may have about suffering, but what we do know is that if we persevere through it, we'll come out a whole lot better on the other side.
 - a. James 1:2-4.