

Sermons on Job - Lowell Johnson

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Job 1:1-12

HAVE YOU CONSIDERED GOD'S SERVANT, JOB?

Job 1:1-12

Before reading the Passage:

An elderly lady walked into the local Baptist Church. An usher recognized her as a newcomer and said, "Welcome. Where would you like to sit?" She said, "On the front row, please." The usher said, "Oh, you don't want to do that. This preacher is really boring. You'd be happier sitting in the back." The lady said, "Do you know who I am?" The usher said, "No." She said, "I'm the preacher's mother." The usher said, "Well, then, we'll find you a seat on the front row." As they were making their way to the front of the church, the usher said, "Well, do you know who I am?" She said, "No." "Good," he said as he turned to go to the back of the church once again.

Some people think the Book of Job is boring; but, to me, Job is one of the most interesting books in the Bible. Most Bible scholars believe Job to be one of the oldest books, if not the oldest book in the Bible.

Many fine scholars believe Moses to be the author and that he wrote the book during the wilderness wanderings. Most scholars believe that Job lived during the Patriarchal age and place the time of Job's life between Genesis 11 and Genesis 12. He seems to have been a contemporary of Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. He lived before the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai, before the conquest of the Promised Land and he lived outside that land.

Here is a man who knew almost nothing of God as we do today, and yet, as we shall see, he knew God and trusted Him, and worshiped Him as God.

The theme of the Book is found in two questions:

1. Why do the godly suffer?

It's one thing to suffer when you do wrong, but what if you don't do wrong and still suffer? In the midst of his suffering, Job said that if he knew why he was suffering, it would make it easier for him to endure his suffering. Job never learns why he suffered, but in the end Job says that it really didn't matter. He didn't have to know, because God was not accountable to him, but he was accountable to Him. Job declared, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."

2. Do we serve God for our self-interest or for His interest?

Do I serve God simply for Who He is or for what I get from Him when I serve Him. Notice Job 2:9-10.

Read the Passage.

Now, before I begin our study, I have a confession to make. I have always felt as a pastor that before I preached anything to you, I should have experienced it in my own life. So if I was going to preach on suffering and preach on it for some time, was I going to have to suffer in some way because I need to preach what I have experienced myself? Now I have suffered some in my life, but nothing like Job suffered.

After looking at six or eight commentaries on the Book of Job, none of them even hinted that they felt that way before they taught the Book. It was not until I opened Warren Wiersbe's commentary that he expressed what I felt. Let me read to you what he said:

"When I decided to write about Job, I said to my wife, 'I wonder how much suffering we'll have to go through so I can write this book.'

(I didn't want to write or preach in an impersonal and academic way. The Word has to become real to me, or I can't make it real to others.") Little did we realize the trials that God would permit us to experience! But we can testify that God is faithful, He answers prayers, and He always has a wonderful purpose in mind (Jeremiah 29:11).

"You, too, may have to go through the furnace in order to study the Book of Job and really grasp its message. If so, don't be afraid! By faith, just say with Job, 'But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I will come forth as gold' (Job 23:70). Gold fears no fire. Whatever we have that is burned up and left behind in the furnace wasn't worth having anyway.

"As we study the Book of Job together, I trust that two things will be accomplished in your life: You will learn to be patient in your own trials, and you will learn how to help others in their trials."

There is an area of conflict that goes on around us and within us that we cannot see. I'm referring to the conflict that happens in the spiritual realm. We are all engaged in a spiritual warfare, even if we do not realize it. In this war that cannot be seen, there are many casualties.

In this text, the veil is pulled back just a little. We are allowed to catch a glimpse of the spiritual warfare that occurred in Job's life. We are allowed to see and understand a little of what transpired behind the scenes in the greatest tragedy of Job's life.

In this text, we are allowed to see events that occurred in Heaven. What a difference it would have made in Job's life had he known what was happening, but he did not and neither do we. God knows it is better for us if we do not know.

When trials come our way, we need to remember that behind our hurts He has a plan in our pain. We also need to remember that there is help for us when we face our own times of suffering and sorrow. Remember we have One with us Who is able to strengthen us through the battle.

I. The Unlikely Candidate Job 1:1-5

We are told four things about Job in these verses. We are told about his integrity, his treatment of others, his religion, and his morality.

A. Job's Character Job 1:1, 8; 2:3

He was a man of purity, integrity, and holiness. He was a man who lived his life in the fear of the Lord. He was a man against whom no one could make an accusation that would stick.

Four things are said about Job and remember that in Job 2:3 God Himself said these things about Job. It is as if God is "show-casing" Job before Satan.

1. He was Blameless Job 1:1

"Blameless" is a better translation than "perfect." It does not mean "sinless," for Job himself admits "the iniquities of his youth" (Job 13:26) and "my sin" (Job 14:16). The word "blameless" speaks of genuineness and authenticity. There was no hypocrisy or pretense.

2. He was upright Job 1:1

The word "upright" has to do with his integrity in the way he treated others. He would not double-cross a man in business. He was straight-forward in his relationships with others.

3. He was one who feared God Job 1:7

He had reverence for God and honored God and gave thanks to God.

4. He turned away from evil Job 1:1

He walked on the straight path of life and turned away from the crooked ways of sin.

B. Job's Commodities Job 1:2-4

The Lord had honored Job by giving him great wealth and blessings like a large, loving family. He and Mrs Job had ten children.

C. Job's Commitment Job 1:5

Job served as the family priest. He was a man committed to the Lord and to his family. He loved his children and prayed for them and even offered sacrifices for their sin.

All these things just seem to make Job an unlikely candidate for trouble and suffering.

II. The Unseen Conflict

Job 1:6 begins by saying, “Now there was a day” and what a day it was! On that particular day something happened in Heaven that would change Job's life forever. While Job is living his life out on earth, events are taking place in Heaven that cannot be seen by Job, and Job is not privy to the fact that he is the subject of conversation in Heaven. That same kind of conflict still goes on today.

The sons of God or angels are called to make an appearance before God and His throne. Apparently, they are called there to give an account of their service to God. Then we are told that Satan came with them.

Some important truths emerge from this scene:

1. God is Sovereign in all things.

God is on His throne in Heaven and the angels do His will and report to Him. God is seen as sovereign in the Book of Job and the key name for God in Job is “The Almighty,” found 31 times.

2. A second truth is that Satan has access to God's throne in heaven.

3. God found no fault with Job, but Satan did.

“Satan” is one of the titles given to the devil. It means adversary, accuser, opponent, enemy. This is a courtroom scene, and God and Satan render different verdicts about Job. Keep in mind that God said “Not Guilty!” There was nothing in Job's life that compelled God to cause Job to suffer. But Satan said “Guilty” because he is the accuser of God's people and finds nothing good in them.

Satan's accusation against Job was really an attack on God. We might paraphrase what Satan said like this: “The only reason Job fears You is because You pay him to do it. You protect him and prosper him as long as he obeys You and worships You. You are not a God worthy of worship! You have to pay folks to honor You.”

4. A fourth truth is: Satan can touch God's people only with God's permission, and God uses it for their good and His glory.

The action is about to begin with four alternating scenes in Heaven and on earth.

Scene 1: Heaven – Job 1:6-12

God is the instigator. God is the One Who brought Job into the conversation. Satan did not speak until he was spoken to.

God asked Satan where he had been and what he had been doing. He was doing what I Peter 5:8 said he would do – going throughout the earth seeking whom he could destroy. Then God asked Satan, “Have you set your heart on my servant Job?” Satan has. He would give anything to destroy Job. He tells God that Job only worships and serves God because He bribes him. “Take it all away and he'll forget You!?”

God tells Satan he can take everything but Job's life. And so at the end of this scene, Satan can't wait to get at Job. The verse says, “Satan went out from the presence of the Lord” to do Job harm.

Scene 2: Earth – Job 1:13-22

It was one crisis after another for Job. Satan unleashed everything he had against Job. In one day all of his livestock were stolen or destroyed. A wind came and destroyed the house where all ten of his children were, and all ten were killed. All his servants were killed.

Scene 3: Heaven – Job 2:1-7

Satan asked permission to touch Job's body and he was covered from head to toe with boils.

Scene 4: Earth – Job 2:7-10

Even his wife told Job to curse God and die, but the Bible says Job did not sin against God with his lips.

III. An Unfazed Commitment

What was Job's response to all of this? His response shocked Satan.

See Job 1:20-22 and Job 2:7-10.

The host of Heaven and of Hell watched to see how Job would respond to the loss of his wealth, his health, and his children. I think

even Satan was shocked at Job's response.

1. Job expressed his grief in a manner normal for that day. God expects us to be human. Even Jesus wept. Notice Job 1:20.
2. Job looked back to his birth. He said, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb" – Job 1:21a. Everything Job owned was given to him from God and the same God Who gave it had the right to take it away.
3. Then Job looked ahead to his death: He said, "Naked shall I return." Nothing that is acquired between his birth and death would go with him to the next world.
4. Finally, Job looked up and uttered a magnificent statement of faith: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord."

Instead of cursing the Lord, as Satan said Job would do, Job blessed the Lord.

Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7

WHEN TRIALS BECOME OUR TEACHER

If you love the Lord Jesus, why do you love Him? First John 4:19 answers that for us: "We love Him, because He first loved us."

If you love the Lord Jesus, are you faithful to him? Do you serve Him? Do you obey Him? Well, if you do love Him and you are faithful to Him and you serve Him and you obey Him, why do you do so? Is it just because of what you can receive from Him?

Satan came before the Lord and made an accusation against one of God's great saints. Satan told God that the only reason Job served Him was because God protected Job and prospered Job. Then Satan told God that if He took everything from Job and stopped protecting him and stop prospering him, he would curse God to His face and die. That was the challenge. Satan did his worse; yet, Job responded just as God said he would. Read Job 1:20-22.

Satan comes back to God and tells God that the test didn't go far enough. If God would let him touch Job's flesh and bone, Job would curse God to His face. God told Satan that he could take everything from him but his life. Satan leaves immediately. Satan departed to attack Job.

I. Job's Affliction From Satan Job 2:7-8

The point here seems to be that there is a distinction between what a person HAS and what a person IS. What a person IS is closer to the person's heart than what he HAS.

Satan is saying that "every man has his price." God allowed him to take Job's livestock, but Job could raise other livestock. Satan had taken his crops, but Job could raise other crops. Satan had taken his children, but Job could produce other children. But to touch his flesh and bone was much more personal. He only has one life.

Had we been writing the story, we would have had the Lord say to Satan, "Enough is enough. The man has suffered more than any human being in one day. He has proven that his piety is genuine. This man worships Me because he knows I am worthy of worship. End of trial." That's what we would have said. But it is necessary for this man to demonstrate a full and deep obedience to the glory of God.

In the first four scenes the agents were either human (the Sabeans and the Chaldeans) or impersonal (lightening and hurricane). Here Satan is the immediate agent of Job's suffering: "Satan ...struck Job" (verse 7). Satan struck Job's person, afflicting his skin with painful, loathsome boils and sores. And he did it "from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head." It was a total and personal affliction with no reprieve. All of Job's person is invaded.

God knew when He allowed Satan to touch Job's flesh and bone that he would try to ruin and destroy Job (see Job 2:3).

I have gone through the Book of Job and took note of all the references to the symptoms that accompanied this ailment. This is a summary of what he suffered:

1. Inflamed, loathsome boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head – Job 2:7. Elephantiasis or black leprosy.
2. Persistent itching that endured at all times with no medication or pain relief. He would scrape at his sores with a piece of broken pottery. Perhaps breaking the sores open to release the infection – Job 2:8.

3. Job was rejected, isolated, and had to relocate to the ash heap outside the city. We would call it the city dump today. It is the place that Jesus was later to use as the best human image to represent Hell, Gehenna, it was called. At the ash heap, dogs fought over something to eat, and the city's dung was brought and burned. The city's leading citizen was now living in object poverty and shame – Job 2:8.
4. Job's face was so disfigured that his friends did not recognize him – Job 2:12.
5. Loss of appetite – Job 3:24.
6. Fears and depression – Job 3:25.
7. His boils would burst open, scab over, cake over with dried filth and then crack open and ooze with pus – Job 7:5.
8. Worms would form in the sores themselves – Job 7-5.
9. Difficultly breathing – Job 9:18.
10. His face was flushed from weeping, his eyelids were darkened – Job 16:16.
11. Foul breath. His breath is offensive to his wife and his friends had failed him and would not come around – Job 19:19.
12. Young children were repulsed by him and made fun of him – Job 19:18.
13. Loss of weight. He was nothing but skin and bones – Job 19:20; 33:21).
14. He was in continual pain – Job 30:27.
15. High fever with chills, his skin falls off his body, anxiety and diarrhea – Job 30:30.

In all of this, he had no one to turn to but God. In Job 2:10 we are told that “in all this Job did not sin with his lips.” Now I know all of us have bad days or even weeks, but nothing like what Job had.

II. Job's Abandonment By His Wife Job 2:9-10

This is one more trial for Job. His wife makes this one appearance, gives him some advice that is not in line with the will of God, and then deserts him. And remember that she is the only thing that he has left from his former life. How painful that must have been for Job.

In Job 2:9 she says to him, “Do you still hang on to your integrity? Curse God and die!” The most difficult thing to accept about this is that Job's wife was trying to get him to do what Satan wanted him to do. Satan can and will work through those closest to us to encourage us to sin. Adam listened to Eve and Abraham listened to Sarah. And Job's wife advised him to give up his faith and commit suicide.

But there is another side to this story that we need to see. Here is a wife who has seen her husband suffer so terribly that she wished him the peace of death. Remember that she had suffered too, and she had also lost ten children.

III. Job's Allegiance to God

Job's response after each trial is a model of faith under trial. I want us to see how Job responded after each trial. I also want us to see how Job handled grief in each situation.

Different people's grief experiences will be as different as their own personalities. But it's good to know that you can survive grief and move forward after being devastated by the death of a loved one.

In Job 1:13-22 Job experienced the loss of nearly all that he had, including his ten children. Notice his response: Job 1:20-22.

1. Express your Grief Honestly Job 1:20

Not only is it okay to express your grief when you are hurting, it is important to express your grief. Grief that is submerged and suppressed can lead to unhealthy emotional problems. To express your grief, you need to understand what grief is. An equation for grief can be expressed this way: Change + Loss = Grief. Major changes in life in which we lose something precious creates grief.

On the heels of hearing that he lost his wealth, Job learned that he lost all ten of his children. Job didn't deny his grief. He didn't flippantly say, “Everything is going to be okay.” He cried long and hard, but he never lost his faith in God. It doesn't show a lack of faith to cry a river of tears. Christians sorrow – but we sorrow not as those who have no hope. It's not only okay to grieve, it's good to grieve. Jesus did at the grave of Lazarus and He knew He was about to resuscitate him.

2. Acknowledge that Every Blessing is a Gift From God Job 1:21

Job said that he came in this world with nothing and he'll carry nothing from this world to the next. The Lord gave. Every good thing in life is a gift that comes from God above.

3. Accept that God May Take Something Away Without Giving you a Reason Job 1:21

Job is going to ask "Why" in a number of ways, but he is not going to receive the answer.

4. Offer Praise to God: When You Don't Feel Like it, Faith it Job 1:21

"Blessed be the Name of the Lord."

Now look at Job 2:9-10.

She said to Job: "Curse God and die." That's exactly what Satan wanted Job to do.

But Job said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak." In kindness he does not actually call her a foolish woman, but he says that what she has suggested is not worthy of her. Here is the suggestion that you would expect from a fool. She has spoken under stress, as if she were foolish.

Far from cursing God, Job says, "Shall we receive good from God, and not evil?" Notice that Job does not speak of himself alone, but of them both ("shall we"). Job says again: All the good he has received, he received from God. Can he not trust this same God to give him evil or harmful things and to believe that He knows best?

Now comes the conclusion: "In all this Job did not sin with his lips."

We have here a simple affirmation that Job passed the test. The question is settled, the trial is concluded. Job's heart conviction is that God is the Author of everything and the Creator Who is worthy of all his worship in the bad times as well as the good.

Is it settled for you? Is God worthy of our worship in the bad times as well as the good times? Indeed He is!

Job 2:11-13 **JOB'S FRIENDS**

Job 2:11-13

Gary Carr tells the story of Chippie the parakeet. "Chippie never saw it coming. One second he was peacefully perched in his cage, sending a song into the air; the next second he was sucked in, washed up, and blown over."

"His problem began when his owner decided to clean his cage with a vacuum. She had stuck the nozzle of the vacuum cleaner into Chippie's cage to suck up the seeds and feathers at the bottom of the cage when the nearby telephone rang. Instinctively she turned to pick up the phone. She had barely said "Hello" when – ssswwwppp! Chippie got sucked in. She gasped, let the phone drop, and switched off the vacuum. With her heart in her throat, she unzipped the bag.

"There was Chippie – alive but stunned – covered with heavy gray dust. She grabbed him and rushed to the bathtub, turned on the faucet full blast, and held Chippie under a torrent of ice-cold water, power-washing him clean. Then it dawned on her that Chippie was soaking wet and shivering. So she did what any compassionate pet owner would do: she snatched up the hair dryer and blasted him with hot air.

Did Chippie survive? Yes, but he doesn't sing much anymore. He just sits and stares out his cage. It's not hard to see why. Sucked in, washed up, and blown over! It's enough to steal the song from any stout heart."

Life is like that sometimes. You never see it coming, but life just sucks you in, washes you up, and blows you over.

This is what the trials of Job did to him and it's what our trials will do to us if we allow them to. They will rob you of your joy. They will steal your smile. They will replace the look of hope with the lines of worry.

Satan wanted to attack Job first in the area of his faith. This is always the way it is with trials.

We left Job alone sitting on the rubbish heap; sitting in the ashes. His wife has come and gone after a disagreement. She advised Job to curse God and die, but Job declares his trust in God. Job is all alone. His only companion, if we can call it such, is a broken

shard of pottery with which he scratches the itching boils that cover his whole body. We can only guess what thoughts filled his mind.

He is alone now, but three friends are coming to see him. Two things I want to share with you about these friends.

I. The Arrival of Job's Friends

A major portion of the Book of Job has to do with the discourse of Job's three friends. The discourse between Job and his friends begins in Chapter 4 and runs through Chapter 37.

Job's three friends evidently lived at a great distance from Job which is understandable considering the great area of land Job controlled with his livestock and crops.

The news of the disasters which came to Job would travel far and wide because of Job's fame and position in the land. Add to that the great trouble caused by nature which would cause the message to travel even more quietly. Camel trains and other travelers would carry the news about Job swiftly. Job was a great man in the eyes of the people in that day; even a celebrity. So everything he did would have been news. A lesser person would not be noticed as much nor would his troubles be broadcast as readily.

These men evidently got together and agreed on a time when all three would go together and visit Job rather than each going separately. You can tell by the names of these men that they were men of nobility and they were godly men. The Bible says they came for the purpose of mourning with Job and to comfort him. That is, they came to show him sympathy and to enter into and share in his grief. Sadly, they became Job's critics more than his comforters. Instead of comforting Job, they condemned him. Job said of them in Job 16:2, "Miserable comforters are you all."

Here is one of the most moving scenes in the whole story, as Job's friends come to comfort him in his pain. Although these friends are going to do Job more harm than good, understand that as far as we can tell, these are three good men and true. They were not fair-weather friends. They were loyal friends who took considerable trouble to travel and come to sympathize and comfort him when he was bankrupt and suffering.

As they catch their first glimpse of their old friend they are appalled. "And when they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him" (verse 12). We may imagine them approaching the city and spying this lonely figure crouched on a smoking rubbish heap in the distance. They knew it was Job. Probably they had been told in advance that was where he was. He was by now a well-known sight in the region. But they could hardly believe it was him. "Is this Job? So thin, so pale, so broken with pain and grief."

Their not recognizing him was a painful thing for them, but no doubt it was also a painful thing for Job. No longer could there be the old natural friendly embrace, the handshake, the smiles of friendship, the warm welcome into his home. Instead they didn't recognize him. They found themselves behaving toward him as to a stranger. There was something painfully strange about his appearance, the emptiness in his eyes, the lines in his face, the brokenness in his demeanor.

"And they raised their voices and wept" (verse 12). Weeping here is not the shedding of silent tears. It is the SOUND of weeping.

Job had torn his robe in mourning (Job 1:20), and they too tear theirs. And they sprinkle dust on their heads toward heaven. To throw dust in the air toward Heaven so that it falls on their heads is to identify themselves in their grief with Job's dead children and with Job himself, because they saw Job as good as dead.

"And they sat with him on the ground" and they were silent seven days and night. No one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great. The sight broke their hearts. They were not ashamed to join Job in the midst of that dust without a complaint. There was a sort of strength in that solidarity of grief.

So the three men sat together with Job for a week.

II. The Assignment of Job's Friends

These three friends come into Job's life to "mourn with him and to comfort him." They failed! But – these three friends show us both the wrong way and the right way to help a friend who is suffering.

A. The Wrong Way to Help a Friend Who's Hurting

Much of what the friends said was theologically correct, but they made some fundamental mistakes.

1. Don't make false assumptions as to why they are suffering.

False assumptions can get you in trouble. Most of the time, we do not know the whole story. Let me share a true story with you.

A Minister of Music was working on a music program and when he started he told the choir that they needed to commit to be at every practice and if they couldn't be at every practice they should not sign up to be part of the choir for this program. They

practiced for three or four months and the night came for the program.

The Minister of Music was in the Pastor's office with the door open as the members of the choir made their way to the Choir Room for a short practice before they presented the program. All of a sudden the Minister of Music said, "Where does Mrs. So-in-so think she's going. She's not going to sing in this program. She has missed the last two practices and I told them from the start that they shouldn't sign up unless they would commit to be here every practice."

He started to go talk to the lady when the Pastor said, "Wait a minute. Where are you going?" He said, "I'm going to tell her she's not going to sing tonight because she missed the last two practices." The Pastor said, "Do you know why she was not at the last two practices? She has been in the hospital for two weeks because her husband beat her. She just got out of the hospital today." The Minister of Music said, "Oh, I didn't know that."

False assumptions lead to false conclusions which lead to wrong actions. Job's friends assumed only bad, sinful people suffer. So since Job was innocent, instead of helping him, their words only added to his misery.

See Job 22:1, 5-7, 9-10.

Linda Mae Richardson wrote this article entitled, "When I was Diagnosed with Cancer." She wrote about how seven different friends related to her after she was diagnosed with cancer, and how she felt after they left.

Friend No. 1 said, "I can't believe you have cancer. I always thought you were so active and healthy." When she left Linda wrote, "I felt alienated and somehow very different."

As she talked about different treatment options, Friend No. 2 said, "Whatever you do, don't take chemotherapy. It's a poison!" When she left Linda wrote, "I felt scared and confused."

Friend No. 3 said, "Perhaps God is disciplining you for some sin in your life." When she left Linda wrote, "I felt guilty."

Friend No. 4 said, "All things work together for good." When she left Linda wrote, "I felt angry."

Friend No. 5 said, "If your faith is great enough, God will heal you." Linda wrote, "I felt my faith must be inadequate."

Friend No. 6 never came to visit her at all. Linda wrote, "I felt sad and alone."

Friend No. 7 said, "I'm here. I care. I'm here to help you through this. Let me pray for you." Linda said, "When she left, I felt loved!"

May we be like Friend No. 7!

2. Don't pretend to know the answers to everyone's problems Don't try to explain everything; explanations never heal a broken heart. Someone said that "sufferers attract fixers the way road kills attract vultures." They are full of spiritual diagnosis and prescription. They know all the answers. You wonder how they got to be experts in everything.

A lady's 14 year old son was killed in a tragic accident and here are some things that she said hurt rather than helped.

a. "I know just how you feel. I lost my mother, my father, my husband, etc."

You don't know how they feel. Nor do I. We can't even imagine.

b. "It was God's will."

c. "God needed him more than you did."

d. "At least you have other children."

B. The Right Way to Help a Friend Who's Hurting

The ministry of silence is usually of much greater value than the ministry of words to the brokenhearted.

To best help your grieving friend, just be a friend. If anyone must talk, let it be the grieving friend. You should simply listen,. LISTEN without offering explanation and without passing judgment. Job's friends were of much greater help when they said nothing for seven days. It was when they started speaking that the problems started.

– You never regret something you never say!

This came from the little book, The View From a Hearse.

“I was sitting, torn by grief. Someone came and talked to me of God's dealings, of why it happened, of hope beyond the grave. He talked constantly, he said things I knew were true.

“I was unmoved, except I wished he'd go away. He finally did.

“Another came and sat beside me. He didn't talk. He didn't ask leading questions. He just sat beside me for an hour and more, listened when I said something, answered briefly, prayed simply, left.

“I was moved. I was comforted. I hated to see him go.”

Friends have done it right when those who are hurting hate to see you go.

Job 3:1-4a, 11, 16, 25-26

I JUST WANT TO DIE

Job 3:1-4a, 11, 16, 25-26

When we finished Job 2, we left Job sitting in the ashes at the garbage dump outside of the city gates. Three of his friends had come to comfort him and to mourn with him.

Job had just experienced what no man before or after him experienced. God had permitted or allowed Satan himself to have his way with Job – not once, but twice, and even after that Satan continued to harass and oppress Job – not because Job was wicked, but because he was righteous.

It was God who brought Job's righteousness up before Satan. God said to Satan, “Look at My servant Job. There is none like him. He is committed to Me; he is faithful to Me; he fears Me; he is what all My children should be like.”

Satan then began to accuse God of bribing Job so he would worship Him and live right before Him. Satan accused God of protecting Job and providing for Job and even putting a hedge about him so nothing bad could happen to him. Satan challenges God, “Take the hedge down and let me take all he has from him and Job will curse You to Your face.” So God let Satan take his possessions, his livestock, and even his ten children, but Job remained true to God and worshiped Him.

Again God brought up Job before Satan as true to Him. Satan said, “Let me touch his body and he will curse You.” Satan caused boils to cover Job from head to toe, but still Job was true to God.

Then in Job 2:11-13, Job's three friends came to comfort him and mourn with him. When they saw him at a distance, sitting in the heap of ashes and scrapping his boils with a broken piece of pottery, they couldn't believe their eyes. They didn't even recognize him. His face and his body was twisted. He was almost skin and bones. The friends sat with him in silence for seven days and seven nights. They did before Job what folks of that day did for the dead. Job was not dead but he was well on his way to death, so they did what they would have done if he had been dead. They tore their robes, sprinkled dust on their heads, lifted their voices in weeping, and out of respect, were silent for seven days.

Now we come to Job 3. Job 3 has been called the most depressing chapter in the Book. Few sermons are taken from Job 3. It is the darkest chapter in the Book.

The first ten verses are filled with the words “may” or “let.” These have been called “death wish verbs.” Job curses the day of his birth. He wishes he had never been born. In fact, he says he curses the day he was conceived. Then he says, if he had to be born, why couldn't he be still-born? Then he says, since he was not still-born, why could he not just die now?

The whole chapter cursed the fact that he was conceived, and born, and still alive. The word “curse” here does not mean that he used wicked or vile words, but it means “to reject something or to hold something in contempt.” Job is in Despair and Desperation and Despondence and Disgrace and Depression!

Chapter 3 is a soliloquy. Job is not speaking to anybody. He is not speaking to his friends. He is not speaking to God. He is just speaking with himself. No doubt the friends are within earshot and surely God is listening, but Job is not aware of it and he just talks to himself.

It is much like what happened in Psalm 137. It is a Psalm that speaks of God's people who are in exile of the Babylons. God's people are by the rivers of Babylon and they are weeping. The Jews were a singing people, especially in their worship of Jehovah, but now they are weeping. When they thought of Zion, the dwelling place of God on earth and the Temple, they wept and hung their harps in the willow trees. Their hearts were broken, their children had been murdered, they were grieving and the Babylonians mocking said, "You sang praises to your God in Zion; you like to sing to Him so well, sing to us now." The Babylonians were saying, "Cheer up! Pull yourself together! Sing us the songs of Zion." Talking to themselves they said, "We cannot sing and we will not sing" and they did not sing.

I Job's Disposition

Both during Job's trial by Satan and shortly after the trial, Job's faith was strong and we hear two very remarkable and often celebrated responses:

"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave

and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

"Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10).

We want to major on Job's great faith. "He suffered, he trusted," we say, "and so should we. End of story." But it is not the end of the story; Satan first attacked the outer skin of Job's possessions, wealth, and household. Then Satan goes deeper to the skin and strikes his ten children. Then Satan went deeper to attack his body. But now Satan has gone deeper still and struck at Job's heart. And now we hear from Job's heart and soul.

We don't know how long Job has suffered all that he has suffered – it must have been months and months as you look at the condition of his body. It's one thing to suffer for a short period of time, but it's another thing to suffer more and more as the days go by. Pain begins to break you down. You begin to despair; to feel helpless and hopeless; to think that it will never end; they you are so tired of fighting and you want some relief, even if it means death. That's where Job was!

II. Job's Depression

Job not only suffered physically, but emotionally also. Job began to be depressed.

What is depression? Well, it can be defined as a condition marked by low spirits, gloomy feelings, dejection, sadness, feelings of worthlessness, and accompanying guilt.

Depression is more than just a case of the blues – depression is embodied emotional suffering that is manifested in both mental and physical ways. One experiences deep pain and alienation. It is not just having a bad day. We have all had bad days. Depression literally takes over the body.

Job was a man with a broken body and a broken spirit. Remember that Job does not know why he is suffering. Few things are harder to bear than meaningless suffering. If we could see some reason for what we have to go through, we could more easily endure it. But pointless trouble is corrosive to our souls.

Job asks three questions:

1. Why Did I Arrive? Job 3:1-10

Job curses the day of his birth. He wants to know why he was ever born if he had to live with the kind of suffering he was experiencing.

2. Why Did I Survive? Job 3:11-19

Job could find no reason for his life. Because of his depression, he is not seeing anything clearly. He only sees death as a way to escape his pain.

3. Why Am I Alive? Job 3:20-26

Six times in these verses Job asks "Why?" One point needs to be understood with great clarity – Job is not talking about suicide. He is just wondering out loud why God doesn't just take him out of his pain and let him die.

Job shares a secret at the close of his lament (verses 25-26). Before all his troubles started, he had a feeling – and a fear – that something terrible was going to happen. Was it an intuition from the Lord?

Sometimes God's people have these intuitions. Not long before Janice, my wife, was killed in a car accident, without telling me, she got all the records I would need after her death typed up and put on the computer. About three weeks after her death, I found them on the computer.

Let me share an insight with you. The Prophet Jeremiah also suffered greatly, perhaps when he was put in painful stocks (Jeremiah 20:2) and in depression, he also cursed the day of his birth. See Jeremiah 20:14-18.

J. Allen Blair, in his commentary on Job entitled *Living Patiently*, closes his chapter on Job 3 by saying:

"There is just one more thing I want to share with you before concluding this chapter. Have you ever heard anyone curse the day of his birth? Have you ever said something like this: 'I wish I had never been born'? Going through some season of sorrow or testing, were you sorry you had ever seen this world? I suppose many of us are guilty. But I can tell you one thing: though I have known some to curse the day of their first birth, I have never known anyone to curse the day of his second birth. Have you? I'm sure you have not. No one who has been born again by the Holy Spirit would never curse the day he came to Christ. In fact, can we not agree that this is the most important experience in life? Nothing could be any greater than to come to Jesus Christ and have all sin completely forgiven, to begin life anew. No one would be fool enough to curse this day. But, regrettably, many are foolish enough to neglect this day."

If it were not for Jesus I would be a miserable man!

Job 4:1-6

ACCUSATIONS, ANGER, BUT FEW ANSWERS

Job 4:1-6

Let me begin by saying that there are two basic forms of literature used in the Old Testament; one is prose and the other is poetry. It is relatively easy to spot poetry in modern Bibles, since the print is arranged differently from prose sections. Prose has long sentences and full columns, poetry short sentences with large spaces to set it apart.

Prose is the more natural and spontaneous way to communicate. Poetry is an abnormal and artificial way of writing. It needs to be prepared before hand, it requires considerable thought and the words used need to obey the rules of poetic style.

Then why bother to compose poetry? Poetry has a much deeper effect on people than prose. Poetry can penetrate parts of the personality that prose would leave untouched. Poetry is much easier to remember than prose, especially when set to music. Poetry has a more effective way of moving the reader. Poetry can evoke warm feelings and move the reader.

Consider this little poem:

They walked down the lane together,
The sky was full of stars.

Together they reached the farmyard gate,
He lifted for her the bars.

She neither smiled nor thanked him,
Indeed, she knew not how.

For he was just a farmer's boy,
And she was a Jersey cow!

See, you expected romance but received something ridiculous, which touches your sense of humor. If the same content were to be expressed in prose, I doubt if it would raise a smile.

What are the wisdom and poetry sections of the Old Testament? Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. I tell you that because these books are much easier to read and understand in a modern translation like *The Message* or a paraphrase like *The Living Bible*. I will be using *The Message* today.

Four things I want to point out to you today:

I. The Companions

Job was a total wreck because God had allowed Satan to have his way with him. Three of his friends met together and found Job sitting in the ashes of the garbage dump. He was covered with boils from head to toe. He was using a broken piece of pottery to scrape himself because of the itch that the boils caused. He had lost a great deal of weight and the three friends didn't even recognize him. Job was suffering pain and grief and, out of respect, the three men sat with him for seven days and nights but spoke not a word.

In Job 3, Job broke the silence at the end of the seven days. When he did speak, what he said was a lament. Job 3 could be given the title, "I Just Want to Die." The entire chapter is about Job wanting to die.

It was after this that his friends or companions began to speak. We are told in Job 32:6 that all three men were older than Job.

We assume that Eliphaz was the oldest because he spoke first. Eliphaz based his speeches on two things: his own observations of life ("I have seen" or "My experience shows me" or "It is my observation" – Job 4:8; 5:3, 27) and a frightening personal experience he had one night (Job 4:12-21). Eliphaz put great faith in tradition and the God he worshiped was the inflexible Lawgiver, that left little room for grace.

Bildad was the second oldest and spoke second and is the voice of tradition. He is the religious legalist. Bildad was not only sure that Job was in the condition he was in because there was sin in his life, but he was also sure that his ten children were dead because of sin in their lives.

Zophar was the voice of assumption. He is the one who is dogmatic. He assumes that he has all the answers. He begins with the words, "Know this." He is unfeeling and merciless and tells Job that God was giving him far less than he deserved for his sins! (Job 11:6). He thinks Job is a hypocrite.

In the end God tells all three men He is angry with them because what they said to Job was not right and tells them to go make sacrifices for themselves (Job 42:7-8).

All of us have been the recipient of bad advice. You listened as someone gave you bad advice and then suffered the consequences. On the other hand, we have all benefited from someone's good advice. We were unsure and confused about something so we reached out to somebody we trusted. We received good counsel, followed the advice, and enjoyed the benefits or, maybe some of us have given bad advice and we did more harm than good.

We need to be careful who we take advice from. And we need to make sure we give good advice. Solomon tells us that words given at the right time can be such a blessing. Proverbs 12:15; 27:27; 25:11-12.

II. The Carnality

I am going to read several passages because it's the only way you can sense the harshness as well as the inaccuracy of the advice these men gave. As we shall see, Job was not innocent either.

- A. All three men gave the same reason why Job was suffering: "You have sinned" – Job 4:7-9, 17-19; 5:1-7; 8:1-4, 13-14; 11:1-5; 12:1-3a.
- B. "Job, listen to my advice" – Job 5:8, 17-19; 8:5-8; 11:13-15.
- C. Job's Complaints – Job 6:1-4; 7:5, 7, 11, 15-16.
- D. Job's Defense – Job 6:28-30; 9:1-4, 11-16, 18-22, 32-35.

III. The Confusion

God is so often misunderstood. Often we blame God when God is not to blame at all. I call it a case of mistaken identity. Could it be that we have been blaming the wrong person all along?

It was not God who was behind all of Job's suffering and pain and grief; yet both Job and his three friends blamed God for what Job was going through. Satan was to blame!

How often we blame God when God is not to blame at all. We, like they, ask, "Why has God done this to me?" We often say bad things are "the will of God" or label tragedies "acts of God."

God is not the Author of sorrow and suffering. Calamity is not His deliberate handiwork. Don't let anyone confuse you – God is not in the business of making trouble. Don't blame sin and evil on God. Everybody involved in the Book of Job blamed God – his wife, his friends and eventually even Job.

It was not God, but Satan who caused all the trouble. It wasn't God who troubled Job; it was Satan. It wasn't God who sent the robbers to steal Job's livestock; it was Satan. It wasn't God who killed Job's servants; it was Satan. It wasn't God who killed Job's children; it was Satan. It wasn't God who infected Job's body with sores; it was Satan.

God is not the cause of our problems; rather, God is the Source of strength and hope and gives us the ability to cope with our problems.

When have you ever heard Satan blamed for a tragedy or a disaster? It's always the character of God that's called into question.

As in the case of Job, Satan wants to trouble us so we will curse God and reject Him and blame Him. If Satan can cause us to blame God and become bitter toward God, he has won a great victory and achieved his great purpose.

IV The Climax

Why do we suffer? Let me give you a few reasons why the Godly suffer.

1. As a result of the fall of man. The saved are a part of the fallen human race just like the unsaved. The curse upon fallen man is the same for both saved and lost.
2. As a result of personal sin (Numbers 32:23; Galatians 6:7-8).
3. As a result of other's sin (Like a drunk who hits a child).
4. As a form of discipline (Hebrews 12:5-11).
5. To prove to Satan that God's people will continue to love and worship Him even in the midst of seemingly unfair trouble and misfortune.
6. As an example or inspiration to others.
7. For reasons known only to the Sovereign mind of God. In John 9, our Lord's disciples asked Him, "Who did sin that this man was born blind?" Jesus said, "You're looking for someone to blame, aren't you? Neither sinned, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

Job 14, 1-2, 7-10, 12, 14 IF A MAN DIE, SHALL HE LIVE AGAIN?

Those who study such things tell us that there are 290 questions in the Book of Job. Job 14:14 is one of the best known questions. I think the question is as old as the first grave; asked in sorrow, in grief, in tears, in hope, in fear: If a Man Die, Shall He Live Again?

Did you ever notice the great monuments of the earth are dedicated to death? There is the Jefferson Memorial, the Lincoln Memorial, the Washington Memorial – all dedicated in the memory of one who is dead.

Death is universal, you can't escape it. There is no discrimination and no partiality. Death comes without regard to the young, without pity for the poor, without thought for the aged, without consideration of the good and the true and the beautiful. Death is universal.

Death is not a pleasant subject. We don't like to think about death. We think about it as little as possible. The Bible says death is man's enemy; yet, death is the vehicle through which God choose to get us from this world to heaven. No one is going to heaven without going through death personally, unless they go in the rapture.

Death is personal. No person can go through death FOR us and no person will go through death WITH

us. The Psalmist said, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me." Man is the only creature of God who knows he is going to die and man tries desperately not to think about it.

But God wants us to think about it! Every time a person dies it's as if God is reminding us of Hebrews 9:27: "And as it is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment." Death is an appointment we will all keep and no one will be late for.

Look back at Job 14:14. "If a man die, shall he live again?" Notice that word "again." It is in italics in the KJV. Every time you see a word in italics in the KJV it means that the word is not in the original manuscript and was added by the translators to make the sentence read more smoothly. It usually does that, but sometimes it is not needed or it changes the meaning slightly or it takes away some of the punch. Here is the full meaning of the sentence: "If a man dies, is that the true end, or does he keep on living?"

That is the ultimate question of man. God has put something in man that desires to keep living on. That's why human beings fight for life. Ecclesiastes 3:11 says that God has put eternity or the sense of eternity in every man. Man instinctively knows there is more to life than living and there is more to death than dying.

That's why the Greek warrior was buried with his armor and the American Indian was buried with his bow and arrows. He would need them for the world to come. There is still in the heart of man, a hope of life beyond the grave.

We don't know how long Job had been suffering when he wrote these words or where he was when he wrote them. We do know that everything that could make life bearable had been taken for him and everything that could make death desirable had come upon him.

Three things I want us to see about Job's question:

I. The Reason for the Question

We don't know where Job was when he asked this question, but somehow I believe Job was standing; facing the ten fresh graves of his children. I don't think he was asking the question just for himself, but for his children; his family as well.

Look again at Job 14:1: "Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble." Well, every human being was born of a woman, so he is speaking about every person.

Job says two things: Life is short and life is full of troubles. Life is Brief and Life is Fragile.

In Job 14:2 Job says that life is like a flower that has been cut from the mother plant. It doesn't take long after it is cut for the beauty to fade and it soon withers. So it is with man. In fact, man begins to die the moment he is born.

Then again in Job 14:2 Job says that life is like a shadow. Soon the sun will go down and the shadow will be lost in the darkness of the night.

Then in Job 14:5-6 Job says that life is like a man who has been hired to do an unpleasant job. He can't wait until the end of the day when he can rest from the unpleasant task.

Finally he says there is more hope for a tree that has been cut down than for a man that dies, Job 14:7-10. Even if the stump dies and rots, in the right circumstances, if it gets water or rain, sprouts will come from the stump. Not so for a dead man! Water him all you want, but that won't cause life to come into him.

Then he says that man, in the days he does live, and they are few, is full of inner turmoil. So man has too few days and too many troubles. Life has its troubles, no matter what stage of life man is in!

Job is getting depressed ... And so am I!

II. The Reflections on the Question

Will we live again or will it be "Ashes to ashes; dust to dust, and that's the end of us!" Like a dog, we just turn back to dust and that's all of us.

We need to know what will happen to us when we die.

To tell you the truth, many hope the dead will not live again. It would be better for every lost person if they did not live again. But they WILL! We all will!

"It is appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgment." Standing before God, the truth will come out! All that the sinner ever thought or hoped was hidden will be known.

Do you realize that in that day when men stand before God, there will no longer be any unsolved robberies; no more unsolved murders. Everything will be known: The filthy talk, the life of adultery, covetousness, deceit, hypocrisy; yes, every evil thing will be confessed by the guilty.

Daniel 12:2: "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."

When what we are trying to hide now is exposed, it leaves us embarrassed. We go to great lengths to protect our name and reputation, but in that day, none of our self-protective devices will protect us. That's why I had rather settle it out of court and confess it to Him now, and repent of it now and let Him bury it in the depths of the sea of forgiveness, never to be brought up again.

Do you have something in your life that you are terrified will be brought to light one of these days? Let Him deal with it now!

Now, let's look at the other side for a moment:

Have you ever been falsely accused and suffered as a result? Maybe someone lied about you, and you would give any thing if the truth were told. It will be.

In Psalm 73 the Psalmist was fretting because the workers of iniquity got away with their wickedness and prospered and the righteous suffered and were punished for trying to do right. You've said, "Life is

just not fair!" The day is coming when the righteous will be rewarded and the evil will be punished.

III. The Reply to the Question Job 14:14

Notice the phrase: "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come." Now notice Job 14:5, 16.

Did you know that our Sovereign God has predetermined how long your life and my life will be? He knows the length of our life down to the moment. We will not live a moment less or a moment more.

On Saturday, August 8, 2005, my wife and I were coming home from a trip. When we left that bright, clear day, if you had asked either one of us, "Do you think you will have an accident before you get out

of town and one of you will lost your life?" – we would have said "No." It never crossed my mind. I would have swapped places with her in a moment, but God knew that wasn't when my life on earth was up and He knew Janice's time was. It wasn't my decision; it was His.

Let's let Jesus answer Job's question: Read Job 14:14a and then read John 11:25-26.

Notice the phrase: "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." Well, which is it: Do believers live always or die? The answer is, "Yes." We die physically, but we do not die spiritually. We bury the body but the soul continues to live and goes into the presence of the Lord. Those who believe in Jesus will live even though he dies.

Read Job 19:25-27; Psalm 49:15; 73:24.

It is no mystery that the dead in Christ shall live – 2 Corinthians 5:8; John 5:28-29.

Death is the last enemy, but death for the believer is our ultimate and final triumph. Our Lord Jesus is King and Victor over death – Revelation 1:18.

- Death to the child of God is going home – John 14:2-3.
- Death to the child of God is our door to glory – Revelation 4:1; 21:4. There will be no wreaths on those mansions in glory; no funeral processions down those golden streets; no cemeteries outside the jasper walls. Death is our door into Heaven.

My latest sun is sinking fast,
My race is nearly run.

My trials now are past,
My triumph is begun.

Oh, come, angel band, bear my soul away.
Think of stepping on shore and finding it Heaven.

Of taking hold of a hand and finding it Christ's hand,
Of breathing new air and finding it celestial air,

Of feeling invigorated and finding it immortality,
Of passing from storm and tempest to perfect calm,
Of waking up and finding it Home!