

Message #31

Job 29:1-25

“Memories of the Way We Were”

There is a very familiar and practical verse found in Philippians 4:8 which says: “Finally, brethren, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.” The Apostle Paul, in writing this verse, knew there would be times in the Christian life when peace and comfort would come by thinking about good times and good things in the past. Sometimes thinking about good times and good things of the past is a great way to cope with bad times and bad things in the present.

We have an old saying, “don’t live in the past,” but the truth is sometimes that is the best way to cope with the present. That is exactly what Job does in Job 29. For just a few moments Job let his mind leave the harsh realities of his hurt and think back to the many blessings in life he had experienced.

Job had been a man who loved God and lived life in a way that feared God and in a way that was blessed by God. In Job’s past was the story of a man who truly did have the favor of God. Job knew that and so did everyone else who knew him. People know and sense who God has His hand on. They knew that Job once had all the blessings of God. But everything had changed. The bottom had fallen out and **Satan had attacked Job and taken just about everything away from Job, but he could not take away his memories of the way life used to be.**

Life, at one time, had been good for Job and in this chapter Job reflects on that reality. This is a very important lesson for us to learn:

WHEN A FAITHFUL BELIEVER IS EXPERIENCING ONE NEGATIVE THING AFTER ANOTHER IN THE PRESENT, IT IS COMFORTING TO REFLECT ON THE MANY BLESSINGS OF GOD IN THE PAST.

When you are faithful to God and you are experiencing terrible, unexplained negatives, there is nothing wrong with reflecting on how God has blessed you and used you in the past. There is real comfort in remembering the way things were prior to the negatives. David Thomas said there are times when a man is justified in speaking of himself and the true things that God has actually done.

In this chapter, we get a very personal and truthful look at how the man who feared God the most lived his life before all of the bad things happened to him. Job turns back the clock for us and we get to see what life was like before all of the negatives hit. Job longed for the past and in these verses we may certainly see why. Job did not have a past that was dark; he had one in which he saw God do many things. In fact, he longed for the past and we certainly see why. There are sixteen past memories:

PAST MEMORY #1 – In the past, he had the care and protection of God. **29:2**

The Hebrew word “watched over” is one that speaks of kind care. There was a time when God specifically protected Job and cared for Job. It had been months since he had seen God do anything like that and he longed for it again.

PAST MEMORY #2 – In the past, he had the blessings of God. **29:3a**

God’s favor had at one time been on Job. God had shined the light of His blessings on Job. His days were bright, shining and cheerful because of all the blessings of God. Whenever things got dark, God’s light of blessings shined brighter and brighter.

PAST MEMORY #3 – In the past, he had the direction of God. **29:3b**

There were times when Job literally did have to travel at night and God had directed him and protected him, his family, his herds and flocks. God guided Job and led him in paths of light. Also the light of God’s Word guided him in past times. He faced some dark times and obstacles, but he got through them because God led him through them.

PAST MEMORY #4 – In the past, he had the friendship of God. **29:4**

When Job was in the prime of his days (not a young teen), his life had been ripe and rich. God’s favor and God’s friendship guided and guarded Job. Job had sacred fellowship and friendship of God.

PAST MEMORY #5 – In the past, he had the presence of God. **29:5a**

Truth is God was still watching over Job and was still with Job, but in all of the negatives, Job could not see it nor sense it. Job longed for the past months when he could sense the presence and power of God. Those days were gone.

There will be times in our lives when God will seem far removed from our world. We will wonder if our prayers are even being heard. At those times, we need two thoughts:

- 1) We need to remember the times when God has seemed so close to us and so positive.
- 2) We need to remember that our feelings are not reality.

PAST MEMORY #6 – In the past, he had his children around him. **29:5b**

Job’s children had been killed. There were moments in his life when he longed to see them again. One time when I was visiting a nursing home, there was a woman who was crying and she was saying “I just want to see my daughter.” That was the longing of Job. But his children were gone, they were dead.

PAST MEMORY #7 – In the past, he had a smooth life. **29:6a**

The word “butter” is one in Hebrew that describes curded milk or thick milk. This imagery is used in a context of a life that is blessed by God (Deut. 32:12-14). Job’s life had been a joy to live. Life in the past had been smooth for Job and God guided his steps in paths that kept him from stumbling.

PAST MEMORY #8 – In the past, he had a prosperous life. **29:6b**

Job lived a life of luxury. Everything he did prospered. Oil which was so valuable for food, medicine, lamps and anointing was actually found by Job in the rocks in the ground. Olive trees thrive in rocky soil. At one time life was very prosperous for Job. God had blessed him.

PAST MEMORY #9 – In the past, he had a revered reputation. **29:7-10**

Wealthy, prosperous people are rarely loved and revered. Most of the time wealthy people are lonely, envied and despised. Not Job. There was a time when Job was esteemed by many people. There are four facts brought out:

Fact #1 – Job was a leader. **29:7** “gate of the city”–place of official public business.

Fact #2 – Job was feared by the young men. **29:8a**

Job was so highly respected by young people that they would get out of his way when they would see him coming. This is a sign of tremendous reverence and respect.

Fact #3 – Job was esteemed by the old men. **29:8b**

According to Lev. 19:32, rising and honoring of the elderly was a mark of fearing God. The younger people were to honor those with gray hair who feared God. But notice Job was so respected and the old men honored Job and stood up for him.

Fact #4 – Job was respected by royalty. **29:9-10**

Even the most distinguished political leaders in the world honored and respected Job. He was known and respected by princes and nobles. When Job was in their presence they quieted down because they wanted to hear what this man of God had to say.

PAST MEMORY #10 – In the past, everyone respected him. **29:11-17**

It is clear from these verses that Job was not a man who just got blessings, but he was a man who was a blessing. God blessed him and Job blessed others. He had earned the praise and respect of every person in society. There are five acts that made Job a loved and respected man:

(Action #1)- Job helped the poor. **29:12-13**

When poor orphans or widows came to Job, they found a friend that could turn their sorrows into joy. Job did not just have a ritual righteousness, it was a real righteousness.

(Action #2)- Job was righteous and just. **29:14**

Job made decisions that were right decisions. He was not partial.

(Action #3)- Job helped the handicapped. **29:15**

Blind people and crippled people found a friend in Job.

Former President Clinton had an interesting thing happen to him before he became President. David Ferren, of Little Rock Arkansas, became blind in 1962 when he damaged his optic nerve while delivering supplies to a missile silo that was under construction in Arkansas. Shortly after Bill Clinton lost his 1974 run for Congress, Mr. Ferren met Mr. Clinton and told him at a fund-raising event that he thought that one day Bill Clinton would be President of the United States. Then he said to him, when you are President, I would like a tour of Air Force One. Mr. Clinton responded by saying "I'm not going to become president, but if I do, I promise I'll let you tour Air Force One." Sure enough one day, after President Clinton had been elected, Air Force One landed in Little Rock and David Ferren got his wish. He was even allowed to sit in the navigator's seat. President Clinton won a friend for life because he was kind to a blind man.

That is the way Job was.

(Action #4) - Job defended the needy. **29:16**

People who were so poor that they couldn't afford a lawyer went to Job and he was their defense.

(Action #5) - Job punished the wicked. **29:17**

Job would not ever let the wicked get away with devouring anyone. Oft times, Job would see one wicked attacking someone and Job took their prey right away.

It is no wonder Job was so highly respected. He had done so much for so many. But this book of Job teaches us a very important lesson—people can turn against you in a hurry and they can forget about all you did for them. These people who had been helped so much by Job were not alienated from Job. They had turned against Job, but Job still had his memories of the way things were.

PAST MEMORY #11 – In the past, he had positive future hope. **29:18**

Job believed he would have length of life and comfort in death. Job viewed life as a nest; you live comfortably and are protected and surrounded by a caring family (Deut. 32:11). Job never dreamed that life could turn out so bad. At one time the future looked bright.

PAST MEMORY #12 – In the past, he had a refreshing life. **29:19-20**

He was himself refreshed and refreshment to others. He was strong and alive. Every day he lived life ready to tackle the battle. But now he was beaten down.

PAST MEMORY #13 – In the past, people listened to him. **29:21-22**

Job would expound things and they would not even speak when he was done. He so thoroughly and convincingly presented truth that he left an audience in total awe. He often had the last word.

PAST MEMORY #14 – In the past, people wanted to hear from him. **29:23**

Job was a speaker who was often in demand. Crowds of people would wait for him to speak, because his ability to unlock God's Word refreshed them like the rain. There had been a time when the people waited to take in what he had to offer.

PAST MEMORY #15 – In the past, he was kind and gracious to unbelievers. **29:24**

Job would graciously minister to unbelievers. Unbelievers liked Job. But think about how people were now treating him. He had been the best believer on earth and he was not even treated with the respect you would give an unbeliever.

PAST MEMORY #16 – In the past, he made leadership decisions. **29:25**

In the past, Job called the shots. People respected him and listened to him and followed his lead. But because of the negatives, his name had been ruined. He no longer had friends, he no longer had respect, he no longer was wanted or appreciated; all he had was his memories.

As long as you are on top of your game, you are wanted and wonderful. But let the bottom fall out and watch what fickle people do.

Practical Lessons:

- 1) There are times when we need to remember the way things were.
- 2) There are people who will respect and praise you one minute and turn against you the next.
- 3) With God, the way things were can once again become the way things are.
- 4) When we are right with God, the future is always bright.