

EXPOSITION OF JOB

Message #6

Job 2:8-13

Many years ago a leader in our former church said something to me that I have never forgotten: “Tragedy will either cause people to draw close to the Lord or it will cause them to turn away from the Lord.” I have found his statement to be pretty much true.

When tragedy strikes, you will soon see one’s faith or lack of faith. I know in my own life it is the hard times that really test your faith and really push what you believe to the limit.

Job had lost just about everything. He was broke. His servants were dead. His livestock had been stolen. His business was gone. His children were dead and he had been hit with a serious disease, which as far as any person knew, was killing him. There was no medical clinic that could figure out his sickness and there was no medicine that would help him. He had been hit with a big time physical problem.

For the most part, the only people he had left on earth were his wife and his few friends. Now it is one thing to sing “stand by your man” as a catchy tune, but it is quite another to really do that if you are Job’s wife and Job’s friends. If you are going to stand by him you are standing by a man who has been totally broken.

I am sure that most people saw Job as one who had been cursed by God, including his own wife and friends. Job’s faith was really on the line and it never shines brighter than it does right here. The message is clear:

WHEN TRAGEDY STRIKES A FAITHFUL BELIEVER, HE WILL CONTINUE TO TRUST GOD AND HIS GREAT SOVEREIGNTY EVEN IF THOSE CLOSE TO HIM REACT IN ALL KINDS OF DIFFERENT AND NEGATIVE WAYS.

Just because a person has a view or opinion about one’s suffering does not mean the perspective is correct. Perhaps all of us at one time or another have reacted emotionally or ignorantly concerning our own suffering or someone else’s suffering. In a proper “fear of the LORD” we must be very careful as to how we approach this.

There are four different responses that take place to the horrible satanic things that hit Job:

RESPONSE #1 – The physical response of Job. **2:8**

Some of Job’s sores were itching, so Job took a piece of broken pottery to itch the sores. He was sitting among the ashes. What this means is that he was sitting outside the city in the area where they burned dry manure.

The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, uses the word manure or dung in the place of ashes, whereas the Masoretic Hebrew Text uses the word ashes. How are we to reconcile this? The answer is because both are one in the same.

Dr. Samuel Cox describes this place—“The dung, which is heaped up there, (Arabian “mezbele”) is not mixed with straw, because in warm dry countries no litter is required for the cattle. It is brought dry, in baskets, to the place before the village, and is generally burned once every month...The ashes remain. ...There the children play about the whole day long; there the forsaken one lies, who having been seized by some terrible malady, is not allowed to enter the dwellings of men; by day asking alms of the passersby, and at night hiding himself among the ashes which the sun has warmed” (Samuel Cox, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, pp. 49-50).

Job, who at one time had sat in a seat of honor as judge (27:7), was now sitting outside the city among the ashes, being treated as some leper in quarantine. Probably most people would have nothing to do with Job, thinking they might catch what he had caught.

Satan will always end up making life miserable. What Satan did to Job physically, he is out to do to us spiritually. Satan wants to take us from our position of honor and degrade us to the lowest possible level. He wants to make our life miserable and he will do whatever he can to make it that way. Satan wants us to look like and feel like a loser. He wants to knock us down. Sometimes there is nothing we can do about any of it. We cannot stop it. The only thing to do in times like this is to trust God and wait on Him.

RESPONSE #2 – The emotional response of Job’s wife. **2:9**

Satan had gone after Job and killed his children and now he goes after his wife. Over the years I have been guilty of using this verse to make snide remarks about Job’s wife. There is no question that what she asks Job to do is very serious, for it clearly goes against any commandment or concept of God. Having said that, there are four observations I want to make:

(Observation #1) - She was still at Job’s side even after everything negative had hit him.

Job’s wife lived through this nightmare and she did not abandon Job, nor leave him. This woman had been brought to dishonor just like Job and she stayed by his side. The fact is Tammy Wynette’s song “Stand by your man” was something Job’s wife truly did in the darkest hours of life. Job’s wife was a mother who had also lost her children.

(Observation #2) - These few emotional words are all we have of the woman, and it is not wise to judge her entire character on a few words spoken in a very emotional crisis.

Who of us have not been emotional at times and said stupid things? Would you want your entire character analyzed by one odd emotional outburst? It is true she did speak like a “foolish woman,” but she was not really one.

(Observation #3) - God does not make her repent of what she said to Job, but He does with his friends.

Apparently Job’s rebuke of his own wife was good enough for God because He does not rebuke her again.

(Observation #4) - Her motive may have been to help Job out of his suffering rather than to heap on Job more suffering.

She was tired of seeing Job hurt. He had been such a dignified man who was now sitting in a manure pile. What wife would want to see that?

Now Job's wife begins by asking Job a question, whether or not he still holds to his integrity. This is the same statement God made about Job after the first tragedies hit Job (2:3). That word "integrity" is one that refers to Job holding firm to the fact that he had a whole and upright and full spirituality (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 886).

I understand his wife to be asking, "Job, are you sure that you haven't done anything or aren't hiding anything which has caused all of this? Do you still maintain that your spirituality is full?" Frankly, in the world in which Job lived this was a legitimate question to ask. Let's face it, things did not look too good for Job and Job's wife wanted to know if he had done anything to bring this all on.

Now her statement of **verse 9** "curse God and die" must be understood in view of the historical background. The idea of cursing and dying had to do with doing something that brought the death penalty (I Samuel 14:24; 43-45). Her prompting here, even though it is dangerously wrong and satanically instigated, is kind of like a Dr. Kevorkian solution to her husband's illness, whom she didn't want to see suffer anymore. She just wanted him out of his misery. She had seen Job at his best and now she could not stand to see him hurting so badly.

What we do know from this request is that Job's wife had given up. She does not in any way see God's sovereign potential power to reverse this situation. She is totally drained in her emotions and faith and her request for Job to curse God and die was precisely what Satan was after. He had predicted in front of all the angels that this is precisely what Job would do. Now, in a terrible moment of emotional heartache, she played right into Satan's hands. Thank God Job does not listen to his wife.

One lesson for us to learn here is that we must never give up hope because God can deliver at the last moment.

There is no question that Satan knows how to indirectly attack us through our own family members. Satan is shrewd and crafty and he will use someone who cares about you to try to destroy you. This kind of attack is so subtle, because it is so emotional and seems to fit the moment. Wise is the believer who steps back and stays steady under the pressure. Satan plays his game in the arena of emotions. He defeats many people who make emotional decisions rather than biblical decisions.

RESPONSE #3 – The theological response of Job to his wife. **2:10**

When Job’s wife challenged Job to curse God and die, he directs two statements at his wife:

Statement #1 - You speak as a foolish woman speaks. **2:10a**

The word “foolish” is strong in Hebrew. It refers to a wicked, impious, foolish woman who is ungodly and abandoned by God (Gesenius, p. 529). This is not a positive term. Even though the comparative “as” seems to indicate Job’s wife was not this type of woman, she was talking like one.

When a woman becomes emotional and irrational and speaks irreverently, she is speaking like any other godless woman on the planet. It is a good thing Job rebukes her or she could have suffered serious consequences from God.

Those who think you should never judge another person for what they say and do don’t like this stern rebuke of Job, but he is rebuking his own wife.

Statement #2 - Both good and adversity come from God. **2:10b**

Job may be sick, but he is also spiritual and he still has a grasp of the sovereignty of God.

Solomon writes: “In the day of prosperity be happy. But in the day of adversity consider— God has made the one as well as the other so that man may not discover anything that will be after him” (Eccl. 7:14).

Jeremiah writes: “Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that both good and ill go forth?” (Lamentations 3:38).

All through the Scripture, God portrays Himself as a God who can send blessing or adversity. Job believed in the sovereignty of God and he reminded his wife of his belief. Job is not doing this in some theoretical classroom, this was real life and Job is living with real adversity.

Notice the end of the verse, “In all this Job did not sin with his lips.” Job’s rebuke to his wife and his theology were solid. Satan’s plan had backfired. Job is honored as a man of patience (James 5:11) and part of the reason was his mastery of his tongue. He did not typically let a barrage of words go from his lips. When a rebuke was in order, he gave it. When he should be quiet, he was.

I believe Job says there are times when a strong, bold rebuke is exactly what is needed. When stupid things are being said about God or about God’s Word or His church, there is a place for saying you are speaking like a foolish, godless heathen. Job did not sin against God in any of this.

RESPONSE#4 – The emotional response of Job’s friends. **2:11-13**

Now carefully notice the “now” that begins **verse 11**. This is a Hebrew connective to the next thing that happens after the matter with Job’s wife. The next tactic of Satan to try to get Job to turn against God will take up most of the rest of the book. There are three critical points that end this chapter:

Critical Point #1 - The introduction of Job’s friends. **11:11a**

We are now introduced to three of Job’s friends: Eliphaz the Temanite; Bildad the Shuite and Zophar the Naamathite. Charles Feinberg said Eliphaz is a calm, wise man, Bildad was a man of tradition and Zophar was a dogmatic legalist (Bib. Sac., 1934, p. 80).

Eliphaz was probably an Edomite. A man named Eliphaz was the firstborn son of Esau (Gen. 36:4). One of Eliphaz’s sons was Teman (Gen. 36:11). Teman is a place often associated with Edom (Jer. 49:7, 20; Ezek 25:13; Am. 1:12; Ob. 8-9).

Bildad the Shuhite was a descendant of Abraham through Keturah from the land of the east (Gen. 25:2, 6). Bildad is only mentioned biblically in Job.

Zophar is called a Naamathite. There was a small town in Judah named Naamah (Josh. 15:41), but it is not known whether he was from here or North Arabia. Zophar is also only named in Job.

Eliphaz more than likely came from the south, Bildad from the east and Zophar from the north. They were true friends who had heard of the terrible things which hit Job and they wanted to be with him.

These men all had Abrahamic ties to the God of Israel and they all did truly care about Job. There are no better friends you can have than those who love God, His Word and love you.

Critical Point #2 - The purpose of Job’s friends. **11:12-13**

All three of Job’s friends knew God and knew Job. They made an appointment to meet together to go see him. They wanted to sympathize with him and comfort him.

Their motives were true and good, yet it will be their words for which God will hold them accountable.

Critical Point # - The reaction of Job’s friends. **11:12-13**

When Job’s friends first saw Job, they did not even recognize him. There was no more stately man on this earth than Job. There was no man with more honor and grandeur than Job. He was a broken down man and he didn’t look the same anymore to his friends.

When you are really low, you will see who your friends really are. It is easy to be a back-slapping friend when everything is sailing along, but real friendship develops in the trenches of trials and struggles.

Notice their reaction:

(Reaction #1) - They loudly wept. **12:12a**

(Reaction #2) - They humbly worshipped. **12:12b**

(Reaction #3) - They quietly sat with him. **12:13**

These friends quietly sat at Job's side for seven days and seven nights. They were good friends who just wanted to be with Job. Sometimes the best thing you can do is just be there and keep your mouth shut.

Lessons for us:

1. When Satan attacks us, he will try to destroy our reputation so we are treated like a leper in quarantine.
2. When Satan attacks, a wife can become very emotional and say foolish things, which are both unspiritual and ungodly.
3. Being faithful sometimes means giving rebuke.
4. Good friends will be at your side when you hurt.
5. If God sovereignly permits Satan to attack us, He will also eventually bless us.