

July 12, 2020
Sunday Morning Service
Series: Job
Community Baptist Church
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GOD AND HIS SERVANT JOB

Job 1:1-5; 38:1-3; 40:1-2

I recently watched the short video that documented the suffering and persecution of Richard Wurmbrand, the founder of *The Voice of the Martyrs*. It is such a sobering story. Wurmbrand was a Lutheran pastor in Romania in the 1940's when the Russians took over the nation and with a heavy hand imposed atheistic Marxism on the people. Wurmbrand was imprisoned for fourteen years, during which time he was tortured mercilessly over and over. He nearly died from lack of medical care when he suffered with tuberculosis.

The movie depicted an incident Wurmbrand witnessed while he was in prison. The Russian beasts were torturing a fellow Christian, demanding that he give them the names of other Christians. At one point they brought in his son and tortured him in the man's presence. The man was going to confess, but his son forbade him saying, "Father, speak only of Christ." Finally the wicked tormentors literally beat the son to death right in front of the father.

I was deeply moved by the incredible suffering those Christians endured. I have been moved for days now to realize that this kind of persecution of God's chosen people goes on and on today in China, North Korea, India, and many Middle Eastern cultures.

I don't suffer like that. I am an American. I live in the nation that is the most materially blessed nation, not only in the world, but in history. I sit in my nice air-conditioned home, in my plush recliner, listening to soothing music, where I read stories about God's people suffering just because they are God's people.

I readily admit that I live among the most spiritually blessed people in history. I grew up hearing the good news about Jesus dying for my sins. Everyone I have known well all my life has been at least

remotely aware of this wonderful news. I personally do not know anyone who has never heard of Jesus. Even the public school I attended talked about God and taught the theory of evolution guardedly. I live in a city that has more churches than taverns, has more Christian schools, colleges and universities than some states do. And we definitely have more of those institutions of higher Christian learning than some nations have. It is not uncommon for us to be challenged to be blameless, upright, fear God and turn away from evil.

So why do we argue with God? Why do we complain or get frustrated with God when we don't understand what He is doing? Why did Job argue with God? He was, if anything, more righteous than you and I are. He enjoyed a truly unique relationship with God, the Sovereign of the universe. But when God put Job's faith on trial, Job proved that he was made of the same stuff of which I am made.

In the end, God's answer to Job is His answer to me and to you when our faith begins to falter. God reminds us that He does not expect us to know everything. But He does expect us to fully trust that He knows all, controls all, and does what is best for us to bring glory to Himself.

An Upright Man (1:1-5).

The first three verses in this book draw a quick and almost unbelievable picture of an upright man (vv.1-3). According to the text, Job was unusually righteous. *There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil (v.1).*

Right away we learn that Job lived in Uz. That was a bit direct. No other introductory words, like who his family was and where he came from. Typically an important man, a patriarch, is introduced with a genealogy informing us of his lineage. Such was the case with Abraham who we know came from the line of Noah's son Shem (Genesis 11:10-26). Surely Job's lineage was rooted in either Shem, Japheth or Ham because there were no other options. But we are not told which.

Furthermore, even the mention of where he lived causes questions. The exact location of Uz is uncertain. Probably it was in

the southern part of Edom. However, even if that is the location of Uz, the land was probably not called Edom at the time because Edom is named after Esau brother of Jacob. Uz could refer to a region or area, or it could be the name of a city. Much of the story appears to have Job living in a city but having agricultural interests out in the countryside.

What we do know beyond any doubt is that the Bible in this text states that Job was blameless. That sounds impossible in our ears. Statements like that might explain how Job gets relegated to “legend.” But the use of blameless in the Bible does not demand perfection. It is true that the same Hebrew word refers to a spotless, blemish-free lamb fit for sacrifice to God. However, when the word is applied to humans it speaks of someone who has personal integrity. The blameless person walks in fellowship with God (Genesis 17:1) and desires to conform to God’s law (Psalm 119:1).

More than being a guy who lived in fellowship with God, we read that Job was upright. This word describes the person who understands and seeks to live by God’s most important command. He loves God supremely. He loves his neighbor as himself and thus helps the poor, needy, or unfortunate.

And Job also feared God. That does not mean that Job was terrified of God and lived in constant foreboding about what God might do. Rather this word means that Job held the utmost respect for God. Fear of God flows from love for God. Fear of God is built on extreme trust in God’s character and actions. Fear of God demonstrates dependance on God. That is God’s description of His servant Job.

Therefore, in light of these very positive spiritual traits we should only expect that Job turned away from evil. He intentionally, purposely, thoughtfully avoided anything that conflicted with God’s character revealed in His law. This is what integrity looks like. *God stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity (Proverbs 2:7).*

These same characteristics make a fitting description for the Christian who is growing in the likeness of Christ. No Christian is going to perfectly follow Christ in this life. But we should be characterized by a strong desire to avoid sin and rest confidently in

our God. We should be characterized by a deep and unwavering trust in God’s promises.

But, according to Satan’s accusation, Job had very good reason to be blameless, upright, fearing God and avoiding evil. It is true, as Satan accused, that Job was unusually blessed. Job’s family situation was enviable. *There were born to him seven sons and three daughters (v.2).* Seven is the number of completion in the Bible which applied to Job’s sons who in ancient cultures were so important because they would carry on the family name. However, it is quite interesting that when God restored Job’s blessings after the trial, that God named the three new daughters but simply mentioned that Job had more sons—whoever they were. It is a good reminder that God does not always share humans’ measurements of important.

Job’s family was enviable, and Job’s possessions also made him enviable. *He possessed 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 female donkeys, and very many servants, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the east (v.3).* These were very large herds, a whole lot of possession. Job owned 7,000 sheep and goats. He owned 3,000 camels. That represented a huge investment. Camels were a prized possession in ancient near east. What does a man do with 3,000 huge animals he has to feed and water everyday? Most likely Job ran caravans, an import/export business.

He also owned 500 yoke of oxen which would mean 1,000 oxen yoked together by twos. That many oxen would plow a lot of acreage. Five hundred female donkeys were more valuable than male donkeys because they will produce more donkeys.

With all that possession, Job also had to have many servants. The term in our text says it was *many household servants*. The Hebrew word here is a derivative that can be translated “slave” as in Exodus 23:17. But this particular Hebrew word is found only here and in Genesis 26:14 regarding Abraham. *He had possessions of flocks and herds and many servants, so that the Philistines envied him (Genesis 26:14).*

It appears that Job lived in the city of Uz but had hundreds (maybe) of servants out in the country plowing his land, keeping his flocks, and running his caravan (if that is what he did with camels). Job possessed all the evidences of God’s material blessings because God had indeed blessed him. Even Satan acknowledged this. He

accused God, “*Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land*” (Job 1:10).

Job enjoyed God’s special blessing, which God is not obligated to give to everyone. *The blessing of the LORD makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it* (Proverbs 10:22). And we can almost certainly assume, as is often the case, that Job exercised the wisdom God gave to achieve the blessings God gave. *By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established* (Proverbs 24:3).

Human nature loves to enjoy the material blessings that God grants. But as we enjoy God’s blessings, we must keep in mind Solomon’s correct conclusion on this matter. *Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist. When your eyes light on it, it is gone, for suddenly it sprouts wings, flying like an eagle toward heaven* (Proverbs 23:4-5). And true to Solomon’s warning, the Sabeans came and killed all the servants who were working with the oxen and donkeys (1:15). And lightning from God (probably) struck and destroyed all the sheep and the servants who were caring for them (1:16). The Chaldeans came and stole all the camels and killed all the servants who were responsible for them (1:17).

God had given much material blessing and God had taken it away. And Job ceased to be the greatest of all people in the east. The great question is: “*Will Job cease to be blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil?*”

Do you know a blameless and upright person? What does the life and practice of that kind of person look like (vv.4-5)? Job the upright man’s children enjoyed fellowship. *His sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one on his day, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them* (v.4). They would regularly celebrate feasts together. The brothers and the sisters would get together, which is the opposite of sibling rivalries that are so common in our culture.

Furthermore, the upright man interceded for his children. Job consecrated them through sacrifice. *And when the days of the feast had run their course, Job would send and consecrate them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all* (v.5a). In ancient Israel, before the time of Moses, there were no priests who offered sacrifices at the tabernacle.

Furthermore, Job didn’t live in Israel, a land or nation that probably didn’t exist in his day. Therefore, like Abraham, Job took the responsibility to offer sacrifices in behalf of his children. Though there was no law, those who loved and feared God understood His desire for substitutionary sacrifice. As far back as Cain and Abel, people understood that God desired a particular kind of sacrifice.

Job continually showed concern for their righteousness. *For Job said, “It may be that my children have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts.” Thus Job did continually* (v.5b). Cursing God is a big issue in this story. Father Job was deeply concerned that his children might have treated God irreverently in their hearts and he offered a sacrifice for sin. Satan is convinced that if God puts Job’s faith to the test, Job will abandon faith and curse God. He challenged God, “*But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face*” (Job 1:11). When that didn’t work Satan came back and challenged God, “*But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face*” (Job 2:5). Job did not.

Job gives a wonderful example of the upright father. How many professing Christian fathers never lead their families in a time of worshiping God through Bible reading and prayer? A father who is upright and has awesome respect for God will strongly desire that his family come to know God in the same way. What a great example Job is to us. He really had his act together. He looks like one of those super-Christians, the subject of biographies and stories that serve to inspire us to deeper fellowship with God. Or do such stories discourage us, causing us to conclude that there is no way we can aspire to such heights of intimate fellowship with our Creator God? Oh, that we could be like Job and be blameless, upright, fearing God and avoiding evil. Maybe you are more like Job than you think.

Now let’s skip to the end of the story. I know that is no way to read a book because it ruins everything in between, it wrecks the anticipation experienced along the journey to the end. But after all the smoke has cleared and Job and his friends have waxed eloquently on who and what God is and who and what Job is in relation to God, God had a few things to say. And when God spoke, Job discovered that while he really did love and fear God, he was . . .

A Faltering Man (38:1-3; 40:1-2).

Though we may not be altogether upright like Job was, like Job we easily darken counsel (38:1-3). God pointed that out when He graciously answered Job. *Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said . . . (38:1).*

God answered Job out of an odd but natural circumstance. God can use any element of His creation as the conduit for speaking. God used fire, earthquake, trumpet sound, smoke, cloud, thunder and lightening to accompany Him when He came to His people at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19:16-20). After a strong wind, earthquake, and fire, God spoke in a whisper to Elijah (1 Kings 19:11-13). In other Scriptures we learn that God spoke through thunder, dark clouds, earthquakes, and fire. Still in modern life, God has used natural elements and catastrophic natural disasters to get the attention of people He desires to talk to.

But, today God answers us out of His Word, and ONLY out of His Word. It is still true that God can use any variation of circumstances or even natural disasters to get peoples' attention. But having arrested our attention, God speaks through His Word. Be wary of getting revelation from some other source. God speaks through the Holy Spirit as we read His Word. God speaks as we hear His Word preached or taught. God speaks as He uses the testimony of someone else regarding the truth of His Word.

Learn to discern the voice of God from the voice of human authority. Job's friends spoke much truth, but ultimately their authority was their own experience. Human experience, ideas, recommendations, might illustrate God's truth, but illustrations almost always break down at some point. In contrast to human wisdom or authority or experience, God's Word is the only thing that comes with this two-fold, iron-clad guarantee: 1) You will know God's will. *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:2).* 2) You will be equipped to do God's work. All Scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable. . . *That the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:17).*

That God spoke to Job through a "micro-burst" is an attention-grabber. That God was willing to speak to Job was a wonderful demonstration of His grace. We should thank God that He speaks to us from His Word, even when in loving wisdom God rebukes us.

God rebuked Job and, like He does for us, proves that we are ignorant. God said out of the tempest, *"Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" (38:2).* God said this to the guy who we already know was blameless, upright, fearing God and avoiding evil. We would have expected God to compliment Job by saying something like, *"The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but the perverse tongue will be cut off" (Proverbs 10:31).* That would have been fitting rebuke for those miserable counselors.

Instead, God doesn't say what we would like to hear but He challenges us to "man-up." God told Job, *"Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me" (38:3).* In the discourses Job had challenged God to a debate. *"I will say to God, Do not condemn me; let me know why you contend against me" (Job 10:2).* *"Then call, and I will answer; or let me speak, and you reply to me" (Job 13:22).*

Job threw down the gauntlet and God accepted the challenge. God's challenge, *Dress for action*, means get ready for work, prepare yourself. It is the picture of an ancient worker wrapping his long robe into his belt so he can do the work at hand. It is a phrase that might apply to getting ready for the battle. Or in this situation it more likely means, "Get your case ready because I will see you in court." Or guys who have been in the military might see in these words, "You want a fight? Fine. Put on the gloves, Buddy." That should be a very frightening scenario when the opponent is God. How can a blameless and upright man end up in the ring ready to fight God?

We easily contend with the Almighty (40:1-2). Of course, that is an unwise practice. *And the LORD said to Job: "Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty?" (vv.1-2a).* We easily, carelessly slide into a fight we never intended to have. In his arguments, Job has plainly stated that God is wrong and needs correcting. He concluded that God was wrong to allow His servant to suffer. Maybe he concluded that God was wrong to let the test become so severe and so prolonged. Or he was like us who conclude that God was wrong to not explain to His servant what He was doing. Or that God was

wrong not to enter into debate and allow His servant to state his side, his viewpoint, his opinion.

This week I sat in my office thinking about cases of prolonged suffering both in our assembly and in my family. I wasn't accusing God. I was just asking "Why?" When we face an unexpected tragedy, it is shocking like getting hit in the face with a bat. But in time the shock passes, we get closure and move on with life. However, with endless, chronic suffering there seems to be no end in sight. The sufferer wakes up every morning (if indeed he or she even slept the night before) wondering how severe the suffering will be today. And I ask God, "Why do you allow this?" Does God owe me an explanation? Am I not concluding even by that question that God is being unjust, or that God is somehow remiss in His sovereign design? I am guilty of being a faultfinder who contends with God.

God's rule is pretty simple: Don't argue with God. "*He who argues with God, let him answer it*" (v.2b). We do wonder about what we do not know. In the context of the story, God had just pointed out to Job that He is indeed the sovereign controller over all matters in the universe He created. Okay, then answer God Job, and David, and you, all of us. Are you going to trust God to take care of His creation (of which you and I are a part) or not? What will your answer be?

Again, the lesson in Job is, "When God makes a person righteous, He will bring that work to completion." When God gives faith, faith will win in the battle with Satan. God still promises us, *Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4).*