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Grace Evangelical Church
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"Life Changing Lessons From Biblical Personalities"
"Suffering – Does God Have An Answer?" - Job
Job 1

As you know, life is not always easy.

In a small Texas town, a new bar/tavern started constructing a building to open up their business. The local Baptist church started a campaign to block the bar from opening with petitions and prayers.

Work progressed, however right up till the week before opening, when lightning struck, hit the bar, and it burned to the ground.

The church folks were rather smug in their outlook after that, until the bar owner sued the church on the grounds that the church was ultimately responsible for the demise of his building, either through direct or indirect actions or means. The church vehemently denied all responsibility or any connection to the building's demise in its reply to the court.

As the case made its way in to court, the judge looked over the paperwork..

At the hearing he commented, 'I don't know how I'm going to decide this, as it appears from the paperwork, we have a bar owner who believes in the power of prayer, and an entire church congregation that doesn't.

Life does have its challenges, and I've found that a little humor can ease some of the tension that comes with our challenges.

Of course, Job, the biblical personality we are considering today, really had some challenges.

He lost his possessions, and his children. Then Job was plagued with boils from the sole of his feet to the crown of his head. Job's wife told him to curse God and die. Those who counseled him seemed to think that Job was suffering because of his sin, and he needed to repent.

How did Job respond to such calamity, suffering and advice from his so-called friends?

Before we answer that question, let's look at Job's in his person and character a little more.

I. The person of Job described (1:1-3).

Job was not a mythical character. He was a historical person who lived on planet earth. Ezekiel refers to Job in Ezekiel 14:14. In James 5:11, James refers to Job referring to the patience or endurance of Job.

We are not sure who wrote the book, perhaps Job himself, Moses, Solomon, or Elihu, one of his friends.

Job's name may mean, "the one who turns back to God" or "the assailed or persecuted one."

Job lived in the land of Uz, which is an area South East of the Dead Sea, which is the same territory as Edom (Lamentations 4:21).

He was blessed with a wife, seven sons and three daughters (Job 1:2).

He was a very wealthy man possessing 7,000 sheep, 3000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and had many servants. He was the greatest of all men in the east.

II. The time Job lived.

The date the events in the Book of Job took place, and when the Book of Job was written may be two different situations.

The reasons the events of the Book of Job took place in the patriarchal period around the time of Abraham are as follows:

1. Job lived more than 140 years (Job 42:16), not an unusual life time in the patriarchal period.
2. Job was very wealthy. In the economy of that day wealth measured in livestock (Job 1:3).
3. Job acted as the priest of the family (Job 1:5) like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
4. There is no reference to the nation of Israel or the Mosaic law, suggesting that Job lived before Moses.

Others think that the events of the Book of Job took place in the patriarchal period but that the Book of Job was written later, say in the time of Solomon (950 B.C.), since the Book of Job has characteristics of other wisdom literature, or Job was written at the time of the Exile or after, yet the mention of Job by Ezekiel negates a later date.

It's seems best to conclude, with the detailed report of the speeches of Job and his friends, that the Book of Job was written shortly after the events in the Book took place in the patriarchal period.

III. Job's faith set forth (Job 1:1).

1. Job feared God – that is he had his faith in the God revealed to him in the Old Testament. He did not depend upon himself but in the God in whom he trusted.
2. Job was blameless – that didn't mean that Job was sinless, but that Job couldn't be charged with any moral failure. From the human point of view he was without blame.
3. Job was also upright – that is in his character he was justified, declared righteous before God, and his actions demonstrated that by his doing God's will – doing what was right.
4. Job turned away from evil – This is the outcome of a righteous character. Job had discernment from God and he did not get involved in that which was against the LORD's character.

IV. Job's faith tested (Job 1:6-2:10).

1. The first dialogue between God and Satan (Job 1:6-12).

This section of Scripture is one of the most amazing in the sacred writ. Satan has direct access to God's presence.

(1) The LORD's questions to Satan.

1. The LORD asks Satan from where he comes. Satan answers from roaming about on the earth, and walking around on it."
2. Then the Lord asks Satan if he has considered Job, His servant? For there is no one like him on earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil?"

This section of Scripture is very clear that Satan (as an angel or spirit being) is alive and well. His name, Satan (means adversary) telling us that he is opposed to God's program and God's people as he has the freedom to roam about and walk on the earth. Satan still has that freedom today along with his angels (called demons) to thwart the program and people of God, although he has been defeated through the death, burial bodily resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. The believer in Christ has victory over Satan through the blood of Jesus Christ and the Word of God. One day from Revelation 20, we are told that Satan will be bound a thousand years, after which he will be released to go out and deceive the nations. Eventually he will be thrown into the lake of fire to suffer without end.

Why God asks Satan if he has considered His servant Job we are not told. Perhaps God was just informing Satan that in spite of what was happening in the world at that time, there was Job who was totally committed to Him and engaged in doing His will. Before men he was without offense, and his heart was centered on following the Lord.

(2) Satan's question of the LORD.

Satan picked up on this right away, and in Job 1:9, **Satan answers the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing?"**

What does Satan mean here? Satan is challenging God that Job just serves HIM because he has been blessed by God. This means that Job just serves God out of selfish motives for what he can get out of it. Put another way Satan is saying that Job's faith is just based upon expediency rather than on the substance of a personal relationship with who God is.

(3) Satan's contention with the LORD.

Satan contends with God that He is protecting Job and blessing the work of his hands, his possessions and his land. Satan tells the LORD that, if He put forth His hand and touched all that he had, Job would curse God (Job 1:10-11).

(4) LORD's words to Satan.

God responds to Satan, "Behold all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him." (Job 1:12). Satan departed from the presence of the LORD.

2. Job's first test (1:13-22).

(1) Job's possessions are destroyed and his children's lives taken (Job 1:13-19).

The events here described are evidence of Satan being given power here to influence various people and elements of nature to destroy Job's servants, possessions, and children..

(2) Job didn't curse God as Satan thought he would (Job 1:20-22). Rather Job blesses the name of the LORD.

3. The second dialogue between God and Satan (Job 2:1-6).

Since Satan's first attack on Job's possessions and family didn't go as he anticipated, Satan is in the LORD's presence a second time.

(1) God asks Satan basically the same questions as in the first encounter with him.

"Where have you come from?"

(2) Satan answered.

He had come from roaming about the earth and walking around on it.

(3) God's question to Satan.

"Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him to ruin him without cause." (Job 2:5).

(4) Satan replied.

"Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. However, put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse You to Your face."

What did Satan mean? As long as man's personal skin isn't touched, he will hang in there. It's okay to touch the skin of one's possessions, servants and children. Touch a man's personal skin, and he will curse God.

(5) God answered.

"Behold, he (Job) is in your power, only spare his life.

4. Job's second test (Job 2:7-10).

(1) Satan smote Job with awful boils so that they covered his entire body (Job 2:7).

(2) Job sat in ashes scrapping himself with a piece of broken pottery (Job 2:8).

This was very humbling for Job since he was a judge at the city gate (Job 29:7). He was now unclean and a social outcast.

(3) Job's wife told Job to curse God and die (Job 2:9).

Job's wife was concluding that he was suffering because God was unfair.

(4) Job would not curse God (Job 2:10).

He believed that good and adversity came from God, not punishment for sin, but to test and discipline for growth in a relationship with the LORD.

V. Job's miserable comforters (Job 2:11-31:40; 16:1 – sorry/miserable comforters).

From Job 2:11- 42:6, we have Job dialoguing with his three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, who lived nearby to Job, and finally Elihu spoke, who was a descendant of Buz, the nephew of Abraham (Genesis 22:21).

1. Job's three comforters sat down with Job for 7 days and 7 nights before saying anything.

A wise thing to do when someone is hurting, to just be there with that person – to sympathize with the individual rather than have a lot to say.

2. The gist of the counsel of Job's three friends can be summarized this way.

The counsel of three Job's friends is basically that he must have sinned and God was punishing Him because of that. Job needed to repent.

3. Job answered his first three friend with these thoughts.

Job told his friends that he was innocent before God. Some of his famous words are in Job 9:33 where he asked for an umpire between him and God. In the midst of his suffering Job in 19:25-26, stated his unchanging faith in the LORD, "As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God."

Even though Job had strong faith in the God of resurrection and justice, he still wondered why God didn't respond to him during that time (Job 30:20). In fact, Job wished that he had one to hear him, an advocate. He wanted the Almighty to answer him (Job 31:35). Job still wanted God to respond to him.

4. Elihu spoke last, who must have been listening to the words of the other three men talking to Job (Job 32-37)

Elihu, though, younger than the rest speaks last and has some insight into what was happening to Job. Elihu points Job to the greatness and providence of God, telling him to recognize God's purpose in his suffering, and to join in exalting God. In Job 36:18, Elihu is telling Job to not let the greatness of his sufferings keep him from accepting them. Job should submit to the Lord. In Job 36:21, Elihu tells Job not to rebel against God but to submit to his affliction in meekness. As Elihu ends his words to Job, he encourages Job to consider the wonders of God's creation and to turn from his rebellious ways. From Job 42:7, Elihu is not included in the need for a sacrifice to be made for him as the other three friends of Job. He must have been closer to the truth than the other three.

VI God's life-changing answer (Job 38:1-41).

Amazingly, God doesn't give Job any reasons for what had transpired in his personal life, with his family, and with his possessions.

1. God revealed His knowledge to Job (Job 38:-40:1).

God asks Job where he was when He laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me, if you have the understanding (Job 38:4). Job is not able to determine the movements of the heavens (Job 38:31).

2. Job after hearing God speak to him about His knowledge, responds to God by telling him that he is insignificant, what can I reply to you (Job 40:3-5).

3. God revealed His power to Job (Job 40:6-41:34).

The LORD answered Job out of the storm and reminded Job of His creative ability and power to control the animal world.

4. Job hearing God's words about His knowledge and power, responds in Job 42:2-6.

"I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge? Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me which I did not know. Hear, now, and I will speak; I will ask You, and You instruct me. I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; But now my eye sees you: Therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes."

God did not appear to Job in any form, but what God revealed to Job was sufficient for Job to see and understand the knowledge and power of God. But seeing God in that way caused Job to humble himself and repent of all rebellion and pride.

VII. God's restoration of Job (Job 42:7-17).

1. God directs his friends to make restitution with Job (Job 42:7-9).

They had not spoken (the three) what was right about God so God directed them to make a sacrifice as an evidence of their humble repentance before God and to have Job pray for them for he had responded to God acceptably.

2. God blessed Job abundantly (Job 42:10-17).

All of Job's brothers and sisters came to Job and they ate bread together, and they consoled and comforted Job regarding all the adversities he had experienced. They also gave Job money and a ring of gold. The Lord gave Job twice as many sheep, twice as many camels, twice as many oxen, and twice as many donkeys. He gave Job another 7 sons and 3 daughters, blessings his beautiful daughters with an inheritance.

Job lived another 140 years seeing his sons, and his grandsons, four generations.

VIII. What would the Lord have us learn and apply to our individual lives from Job on this first Sunday in Advent?

1. We need to understand that Job was not aware of what was happening in heaven between God and Satan when he was experiencing his adversity and suffering on earth.

2. God is sovereign over all.

(1) Satan acknowledged God's sovereignty in heaven over earth.

He knew he couldn't touch Job without God's permission. Satan told God that you have put a hedge about Job (1:10). When God permitted Satan to go ahead and bring adversity into his life plus personal suffering, Satan always followed God's instruction – Job is in your power, but save his life. Satan did just that. Satan never has the last word. He is not all-powerful and all-knowing. Sometimes, it may look like he has the last word. But He is subject to the Biblical God who is all-knowing and all-powerful. Satan is a created being not the Creator.

(2) Job acknowledged God's sovereignty over his life.

"The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away" (Job 1:21b).

"Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?" (Job 2:10).

Meaning God uses adversity to test and discipline us, and not necessarily as a punishment for sin.

God works out all things after the counsel of His own will, for our good and His glory (Ephesians 1:11).

3. God is not unfair.

When Job's wife saw her husband covered with awful boils all over his body, she told Job to curse God and die (Job 2:9). She was telling Job that such a happening to him was unfair. God was treating him without any reason. Just curse God, and die.

Job wouldn't do that, because he understood that based upon God's sovereignty and his personal relationship with God, there must be a purpose in his suffering even if he didn't know what it was at the time.

Job, then, had a bigger picture of God than a God who was after him, or out to get him to punish him, or who was angry with him. He had an understanding of the love, holiness, and righteousness of the biblical God.

4. One's personal growing relationship with the LORD is key to facing adversity and suffering and working through that challenge.

Why did Job bless the LORD in the midst of losing all his children, his possessions and his servants? (Job 1:21).

Why did Job acknowledge that God brings good and adversity, for testing and discipline? (Job 2:10).

Job's relationship with the LORD was personal and substantive. God was His spiritual rock and righteousness, his Friend.

Satan thought otherwise. Satan thought that Job just loved God and obeyed Him because God blessed Him. His faith was just a selfish convenience. If all Job's possessions, servants, and children were taken away, Job would curse God to His face. If Job was plagued with boils from foot to head, he would curse God and want to die.

Look again at what Job did when calamity came upon his children, his possessions and servants.

"Blessed be the LORD" was Job's response. "Was He really saying that?" we might ask. Or "How could He say that in such dire circumstances?"

Notice that Job wasn't blessing God for what had happened. Job was blessing God, or praising God for who He is - He is God and in control regardless of what had happened to him. Job was acknowledging God's sovereignty, power and presence with him in the midst of the calamity. Acknowledging God's sovereignty released Job from having to try to be in control of the situation, for God was in control.

That's why Paul tells us in I Thessalonians 5:18 to "Give thanks in everything," not "Give thanks for everything." God can always be praised and thanked in any circumstance because He is God and in control of all things even in adversity and calamity.

Then Job acknowledged that God was the God of good and adversity. He understood because of his personal faith in the LORD that in God's goodness sometimes He brought testing and discipline through the various challenges of life. In this Job trusted God for He knew that God had his best in mind.

5. Is Satan the one who always brings suffering, adversity, calamity, and sickness into our lives?

I ask that question, for if you were to listen to some today, you might be led to believe that.

(1) Obviously in the case of Job, God permitted Satan to test Job with calamity and personal suffering.

(2) Paul in the New Testament when he talks about his thorn in the flesh also mentions that his thorn was a messenger of Satan to torment him so he would not exalt himself or become proud (II Corinthians 12:7-10).

(3) So it is possible for Satan to bring suffering and adversity to the follower of Jesus Christ.

(4) At the same time, physical suffering can come by just being a part of the sinful human race – our bodies break down in different ways, or we contract a certain disease. Sometimes there is emotional suffering due to relationships breaking down due to unforgiveness, and sin being the victor.

(5) Sometimes people are in a certain place where a devastating wind storm or tornado hits, or a big snow storm comes. This all happens due to certain weather patterns developing. Still God is in control. Calamity and suffering can come by making wrong decisions, or through disobedience to God's laws.

(6) There can be spiritual and physical suffering for the believer who seeks to live for His Lord (I Peter 4:15-16). Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer or a troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name. Those who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution (II Timothy 3:12).

6. Why is there personal suffering today along with other adversity and calamities?

There is suffering in the world today because God created man with the ability to make choices. When he disobeyed God in the garden of Eden, sin came into the human race. Sin as Romans 5:12 tells us brought death, so sin and death reside in each of us. That's why we get older, sickness and physical challenges are part of our lives. It's why wrong judgments and decisions cause all kinds of breakdown in relationships. It's why creation itself groans, expressing itself in different ways around our globe, waiting for the day of redemption. Yes, we live in a broken world.

Just because some one has a physical, or an emotional, or a mental challenge, does not mean that God is punishing that person because of some sin. Jesus said regarding the man born blind, in John 9 that he had not sinned nor his parents.

Someday, thank the Lord, everything will be made right, and we will live in a new world without, sin, death, sickness, adversity, and calamity. We can count on it. God tells us so in Revelation 21:4.

7. Where is God in my suffering, calamity and adversity?

Some have said that God is not powerful enough or He would step in and rid the world of suffering and the like. Or God is not really concerned about the suffering and adversity in the world. He lives aloof from it all.

Of course, suffering, or calamity and adversity have nothing to do with whether or not God is all-powerful. God is always sovereign and in control regardless of what people say, as we have seen in Job's life.

Although God seemed distant and removed from Job during his dialogue with his friends, God had not left Job. And I believe that is why Job kept saying he wasn't being punished because of his sin, for he knew he had a dynamic relationship with the true and living God, but still he had some questions. Then, of course, at the right time, God showed up to Job and changed his life into a greater understanding of who He was and what He would do for Job. **And note that God did not condemn Job for his questions and his desire to have some answers from God.**

Down through biblical history God has been showing Himself in history and to different individuals. But the culmination of God's involvement in the suffering of humanity was when the incarnation took place – Immanuel – God with us – The Son of God taking upon Himself humanity. The Word became flesh and dwelt, tabernacled among us.

What was the angel's announcement to the shepherds tending their flocks by night outside of Bethlehem? "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

The very word, Savior, to describe Jesus Christ, meant that He was going to have to experience something of the challenges of life in order to bring a deliverance to humanity which was enslaved to sin. Simeon foretold about baby Jesus when He was brought to the temple that Jesus was appointed for the rise and fall of many in Israel, and for a sign to the opposed, and a sword would pierce Mary's soul, to the end that thoughts from many hearts would be revealed (Luke 2:34-35). Next week, we will consider the prophet Isaiah who prophesied in Isaiah 53 that Jesus would come to suffer and die to pay the penalty for all of us breaking God's law which is death.

Jesus Himself knew that His ultimate mission on earth was to give His life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). When Jesus started telling his disciples He would be going to Jerusalem to suffer many things there by the religious leaders, be killed and rise again the third day, Peter began to rebuke the Lord, and tell Him that would never happen. Christ rebuked Peter and told him to get behind Him, Satan, for he was a stumbling block to the Lord, setting his mind on man's interests not God's interests.

Yes, Jesus was rejected, suffering terribly before his crucifixion as he was whipped, a crown of thorns put on his head, and nails driven into his body so he could hang on a cruel cross and die, the most awful way to die, crucifixion. He died, was buried, yes, praise God, Christ conquered the grave bodily, He ascended, and is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven to be our Savior through faith, and soon to be coming Lord and King.

But we can never say that God knows nothing about suffering, adversity, and calamity. The incarnation of Christ shows us, since God has suffered the ultimate before and during His crucifixion, He knows by experience what suffering is all about, even calamity and adversity.

In fact, Jesus learned obedience from the things which He suffered – referring ultimately to His submission to His heavenly Father to be our sin-bearer, our sacrifice to pay the penalty for our breaking His law which is death (Hebrews 5:8). Then in Hebrews 2:10, we are told that the author of our salvation was perfected, that is qualified as our Savior through suffering.

Does the biblical God know anything about suffering? A resounding, YES. The God-man has suffered more than we will ever suffer. He went through hell for us.

So where is God in our suffering, adversity, or calamity.

For the believer in Jesus Christ, Christ is right there in our lives suffering with us.

Look at Hebrews 2:17-18 - We have a high priest (Jesus Christ) who has satisfied God's wrath in His death and bodily resurrection to provide us forgiveness through faith in Him. Then notice the He, Christ, was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted. Then in Hebrews 4:15, it tells us that our Lord sympathizes with us in our weaknesses, meaning He is there with us. He never leaves us nor forsakes us. Yes, Christ lives in us. The Holy Spirit lives in the believer. God the Father lives in the believer. I believe, then, that the entire Godhead suffers with us when we suffer and experience the various challenges of life.

Job wanted an umpire in his sufferings. He wanted someone to come and step in and help him in his adversity. God was always there, but silent, until He finally revealed Himself to Job.

Today the umpire has come, the Redeemer in Christ. We now know that God has not only suffered for us, and provided us redemption, we know that Jesus Christ identifies with us in our sufferings and is there suffering with us, feeling our pain, our loss, our sickness, our adversity whatever it is.

8. What is purpose of our suffering today?

(1) For Job

Job never really found out the "why" of his suffering. He never got an answer from God. When God revealed His knowledge to Job, Job acknowledged he was insignificant before the Lord. Then when God revealed His power to Job, Job finally realized afresh who God was and he repented of any rebellious questioning of God and His ways. Job realized that there was a great purpose in his sufferings, to let God be God and have fellowship with Him. He was in control.

For us today

We have a personal experience with our suffering Savior and Lord Jesus through faith in Him for salvation. He, then, identifies with us in our suffering. He goes through what we go through because of His compassion and eternal love for us. He is always with us and in us. He is there bringing His comfort and His encouragement through the Holy Spirit who is our Encourager.

Do we always know why we suffer? Many times we don't have answers as Job wasn't given an answer as to why he suffered.

At the same time the Scripture does give us a bigger purpose for our suffering and different challenges.

It is to learn to let God be in control, and to let God develop His character of endurance and godliness in our lives (cf. Romans 5:3-5; James 1:3).

Ultimately, as we keep trusting the Lord in our suffering, we have the privilege to fill up the sufferings of Christ (Colossians 1:24), while God is glorifying himself through us (I Peter 1:6-8; 4:16).

Then, since God provides us comfort, His encouragement and strength in our sufferings, we are able as the Apostle Paul tells II Corinthians 1, we are able to comfort – encourage others who are experiencing comfort and adversity. Christ comforts us so we can comfort others (II Corinthians 1:4).

In the midst of suffering, adversity, even tragedy God is there for the believer in Jesus Christ. He doesn't want us to reject him in those experiences but to trust Him and let Him bring His comfort, strength and peace – to let our spiritual roots go deeper into His gracious love and care.

In all our suffering, adversity, and challenges,

Jesus gives more grace when the burden grows greater;
He sends more strength when the labors increase.

To added affliction He adds His mercy;
To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.
When we have exhausted our store of endurance,
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done,
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources,
Our Father's full giving is only begun.
His love has no limit; His grace has no measure;
His power has no boundary known unto men.
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus,
He gives and gives and gives again.

Does God have an answer for our suffering?

Take a look at the cross and open tomb. Jesus provides us salvation through faith in Him, and identifies with us in all our suffering providing the encouragement we need as we trust in Him!!

Praise His NAME!!