

Pain

Job 2:1-10

Go ahead and turn in your Bibles to Job chapter 2. Last week we saw the beginning of Job's fierce trial. God directed Satan's attention to Job and pointed out how he was BLAMELESS, an UPRIGHT man who FEARED HIM and TURNED AWAY FROM EVIL. But what was Satan's response?

"Job only fears You SO HE CAN GET STUFF!" He accused him of being one of those guys that Paul wrote about who believed that **"godliness [was] a means of gain" (1 Timothy 6:5)**. Job was just "working the system," honoring the LORD, not because the LORD was worthy, but in order to benefit personally from it. He told God to take away all of Job's blessings, and then He'd see what kind of man Job REALLY was—as if God couldn't see right through Job to his motives. Remember, Satan is NOT omniscient, so he wasn't privy to Job's thoughts. Satan was SPECULATING, whereas God was telling him the TRUTH about what was inside Job. So complete was the LORD'S confidence in Job's integrity that He told Satan, *"Have at him, but don't lay a finger on his person."*

JOB LOST EVERYTHING—ALL his possessions and earthly security and ALL ten of his children. Only his wife was spared him, but in the end, what was he still able to genuinely say? **"The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."** Job's test wasn't over, though. Tonight, we'll see his suffering intensify. God's Word says...

Job 2:1-3

1 Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD. 2 And the LORD said to Satan, From where have you come? Satan answered the LORD and said, From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it. 3 And the LORD said to Satan, Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason.

"The Satan," literally "the adversary," is back again from his roving about on the earth, and Peter's epistle reveals to what end. **"Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8b)**. He roves about looking for someone to devour, but there's more to this devouring than bringing hardship and pain. While the devil is happy STEALING, KILLING, AND DESTROYING, the "devouring" is getting us to succumb to the temptation and respond sinfully to what's going on in our lives! That's what separates us from God and TRULY destroys and devours.

Every day we're tried, some days more than others. Usually, the testing comes as a mix of unfavorable events and weakness in our flesh. Nothing's gone right at work or school, and when you get home, someone says or does something that serves to push you over the edge. People and situations "push

our buttons,” and we REACT. When Cain was sore over God’s acceptance of his brother Abel’s offering and rejection of his, God called Cain’s attention to the fact and told him that he had two options...

Genesis 4:7

If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.

You can master your flesh and have victory over sin, or you can give in to temptation and let sin master you. You can act as if the day’s events justify any and all of your less than wonderful actions, or you can learn to step back from the situation, and see it for the opportunity to honor God that it is (as we talked about a couple of Sundays back). Satan was looking to DEVOUR JOB by inciting him to CURSE God, but Job hadn’t taken the bait, and that takes PREPARATION, preparation that we can make because as Paul wrote, **“we are not ignorant of Satan’s designs” (2 Corinthians 2:11b).**

In chapter one, Satan IMPUGNED Job’s integrity, claiming that he was only “working the system.” He asked, **“Does Job fear God for no reason?”** After Job remained faithful to God, even WORSHIPING Him despite TERRIBLE LOSS, God FLIPS that statement on Satan, telling him, “You incited me against him to destroy him WITHOUT REASON” (Job 2:3b). God essentially said, “You come here to make an accusation as to why Job should be destroyed, but YOU are the one with NO REASON, no reason to destroy him.” Don’t walk past that too quickly! God Himself has just declared that Job did NOT deserve what was happening to him. As we continue through this brief series, Job’s “friends” are going to abrasively make their case as to why Job does deserve what’s happening to him AND WORSE, but as they do, remember WHAT GOD SAID. Job was blameless BEFORE the suffering began, and now in the midst of it, he REMAINED BLAMELESS. The adversary’s first attempt at inciting Job to curse God had not only FAILED, but as the LORD tells Satan of how Job **“holds fast,”** or *holds firmly*, to his integrity we gather that, far from destroying the integrity Job possessed prior to suffering, the suffering he’s experienced has actually STRENGTHENED him and his integrity. Job’s blamelessness is still intact, and God is still glorified. Continuing in verse four, we read...

Job 2:4-6

4 Then Satan answered the LORD and said, Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. 5 But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face. 6 And the LORD said to Satan, Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life.

“SKIN FOR SKIN!” Satan said. He argued that Job would’ve gladly offered up the lives of his loved ones to save his own skin. Remember, Satan thinks he knows Job, but God has already revealed to him and us that Job was upright and blameless; he would’ve never been so callous. Satan’s reasoning was that the previous suffering was nothing major because it hadn’t touched Job’s body. With HIS life still intact, Satan could’ve been arguing, and Warren Wiersbe points this out, that Job could rebuild his devastated life. He could regain his wealth and have another family with his wife. The previous blow hadn’t even grazed Job, but it wasn’t hard enough; it wasn’t a true test.

Now, I'm not arguing that Satan's line of reasoning was right, but it's true that there's a difference in LOSS and INFIRMITY. The loss of our earthly security or saying goodbye to a dear loved is utterly devastating, but praise God, in those situations, there's still space to consider what's happened and even retreat from it and be consoled. However, when the suffering moves into our body and becomes physical, suddenly, there's no place to hide, no distance we can retreat into ourselves and find some measure of solace. Satan ASKED PERMISSION to SMASH through that barrier and PHYSICALLY harm Job, and GOD GRANTED IT. It's the only way anything like this happens in our lives. God is in TOTAL CONTROL. We saw this when Simon Peter was tested. Jesus said...

Luke 22:31-32

31 Simon, Simon, behold, Satan DEMANDED to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, 32 but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail [PERMISSION GRANTED!]. And WHEN you have turned again [Jesus knew PETER WAS GOING TO FAIL but ALSO COME BACK!], strengthen your brothers.

Jesus told Peter to let the experience grow him and to use what he learned to encourage the brethren, and as one who had been tested (and even FAILED), Peter did! I truly believe that it was out of the crucible Peter went through on the night of Jesus' arrest that he gained wisdom, and yes, inspiration, to write...

1 Peter 5:8-11

8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. [Remember, Paul said in 2 Corinthians 2 that we aren't ignorant of the devil's designs; but Peter went beyond WARNING them to INSTRUCTING them. He said] 9 Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. 10 And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

Even if our trials and suffering on this earth last for our ENTIRE LIVES, do you know what that makes them? TEMPORARY. The trials of God's people don't last forever. Relief and restoration is coming. Eventually Job will see the restoration that Peter promises to those who stand firm as they suffer, but as we'll see, in the midst of suffering, Job entrusts himself to the God he knows. Now we get into the truly "cringeworthy" part. The Bible says...

Job 2:7-8

7 So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. 8 And he took a piece of broken pottery with which to scrape himself while he sat in the ashes.

We can't definitively diagnosis Job's physical affliction. Some scholars believe it was hundreds of large, angry boils covering every square inch of Job's body, which conjure to mind the plagues that would later torment Egypt in the days of Moses; in fact, the same Hebrew wording is used to describe both

situations. "Loathsome sores" has also been translated "malignant ulcer," leading some to think that it could've been massive infection and inflammation that consumed his body like ONE BIG SORE...



An infection that still exists and resembles this is known as "Elephantiasis," a disease caused by a parasitic worm. This affliction usually affects certain extremities, but Job suffered from head to toe, so if this was the "boil" or ulcer with which Job suffered, he would've experienced swelling all over, disfiguring him to the point that, as the text describes, his friends no longer recognized him (2:12). Others view Job's affliction as a TYPE OF LEPROSY. Again, we can't say with certainty. This part of tonight's study is a bit like a medical journal, though, because I wanted to anchor Job's suffering in reality, not leave it floating out there like an ambiguous folk tale. Whatever Job's affliction, he reveals to us later that he didn't just suffer outwardly. His condition had inward, even psychological effects.

In Job 7, Job talks about being CLOTHED WITH WORMS, telling us that THE SORES BRED WORMS; he also speaks about how his SKIN WOULD HARDEN or BECOME TIGHT and then OPEN (rupture) and RUN (7:5), which is likely the reason for the broken pottery he used for (possibly opening the pockets of infection and) scraping the pus from the wounds in an effort to slow and stop the spread of infection. The pain STOLE HIS SLEEP. How often, when we're sick or recovering from surgery perhaps, do we wish we could just lose consciousness? At least, in sleep, we could get some relief. Job thought so too, but Job couldn't stand, sit, or lie down without pain, and IF he ever managed to get to sleep, he was tormented with terrifying dreams (7:14). Some passages make it sound as if he constantly felt like he was choking, wishing God would just go ahead and strangle him to death (7:15). In Job 19, Job said his breath had become repulsive and loathsome to his wife. In the 30th chapter, Job tells us that it felt like his very bones were burning. His pain was continual. His SKIN was BLACKENED, and then it would FALL OFF (30:30). He was FEVERISH, no doubt due to the INFECTION coursing through him (30:30).

Job 29 describes how Job used to sit in the gate; he wasn't just wealthy, he was also wise and influential. Now he sat on an ash heap outside the city. On a pile of ashes, he scraped his sores with a potsherd, both of which COULD have been done in mourning over his current state, but I lean toward the potsherd

and ashes being a treatment for the sores. Like charcoal that used to filter water and absorb bacteria and microbes, ashes are known to have antibacterial properties.

BANKRUPT, BEREFT of all ten of his children, and PHYSICALLY and MENTALLY UNWELL, all Job had left was his wife. Solomon teaches us that a virtuous wife's value far exceeds that of rubies; truly, she's priceless. The wife of someone as spiritual and faithful as Job could provide Him with much needed comfort and encouragement, especially in the midst of his bitter trial. Sadly, and you know this is you're familiar with Job's story, Job's wife only added to his bitterness...

Job 2:9-10

9 Then his wife said to him, Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die. 10 But he said to her, You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

YIKES! Job's hanging on to his integrity by his fingertips, and his wife is stomping on his fingers! She rebukes him for his faithfulness to God, and GET THIS, she LITERALLY encourages Job, WORD FOR WORD, to do what Satan has wanted all along! The sad truth is that Satan, without necessarily possessing them, will USE PEOPLE to accomplish his ends. When we give into the temptation to sin, especially with regard to how we respond to others, we become instruments of unrighteousness in the devil's hands (Romans 6:13). Mrs. Job was so unwittingly used by Satan, but let me call a TIME OUT...

Job was the focus of these trials. Remember, God asked Satan, "**Have you considered my servant Job?**" He didn't say, "Have you considered this GODLY MARRIED COUPLE?" This suffering was primarily INTENDED FOR JOB (they didn't know that), but his wife got CAUGHT UP IN IT. Job wasn't the only one suffering. What had his wife lost? She lost all earthly security, plus all of her babies were dead! Even if their marriage was the most intimate marriage that's ever been, her husband is now repulsive to her because (1) of his current physical state and now (2) because of his PIETY. I'm not saying she was justified in telling Job to "**Curse God and die,**" but she's probably due a little more patience than she's been given down through the ages.

Job, I feel, showed her that patience. We know she isn't telling Job to do anything that she hasn't already done. She's already "cursed" or RENOUNCED GOD. She hit her limit, and you can tell it's irritating to her that Job hasn't. Nevertheless, Job refused to renounce God, and he was suffering with the boils on top of everything else! If there ever was a time to "LOSE IT," this rebuke from Job's wife instead of comforting words was it!

How easy is it to SNAP at someone when you've had a bad day or you don't feel well? VERY EASY! Job could've said, "*You would still be alive to nag me in all of this, wouldn't you? Too mean to just curse God and die yourself, huh?*" He could've yelled, "**WOMAN! Do you even see me?! I've lost everything you've lost AND MORE! I'm BROKEN, and you're KICKING me! Get out of here! Leave me alone!**" He didn't, though. Remember, the Word says that Job never sinned with his lips in all of this.

Instead, he actually tries to TEACH HER, and his lesson certainly isn't without a sharp rebuke. "You sound like a foolish woman," the word for "foolish" having more to do with GODLESSNESS than stupidity. It could be translated, "You're talking like one of the godless women would do!" which goes hand in hand with David's words when he wrote, "**The fool says in his heart, There is no God**" (Psalm 14:1a).

When I hear Job's initial rebuke, "**You speak as one of the foolish women would speak,**" I almost hear him asking, "*Do you even hear yourself? You're talking like a godless person,*" but he doesn't stop there. He says, "**Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?**" Job isn't accusing God of evil; God is only light, no darkness (1 John 1:5). He may as well have said, "*Shall we not receive evil, as if it isn't from God, as if He isn't still in control?*" This question is actually a STATEMENT of CONFIDENCE in the CHARACTER of God. He was saying, "*Sure, things look pretty terrible, right now, but does that change who God is? NO, so trust Him, and LET THAT UNDERSTANDING of His character inform your UNDERSTANDING of the situation.*" Let me REPEAT that. Let your understanding of God's character inform your understanding of your situation. Difficult circumstances don't reveal God to be a cruel deity; our understanding of God's character helps us see that He has a purpose in the circumstances.

When life-altering tragedy strikes or when seemingly minor irritations INTERRUPT the way you feel your day should've gone, NOTHING HAS GONE WRONG! God hasn't dropped the ball in your life. It isn't that He forgot about you or wasn't quick or powerful enough to intervene. He allows what He allows FOR A PURPOSE, and He allows certain things to happen to certain people because He knows that, between His grace and their faith, they can take it! Some experience far greater trials than others, it seems. I'm thankful that I've never gone through anything like Job or even some of you, but upon consideration, the realization hits me that that may be because God knows that I'm not yet ready to handle something of such magnitude. For a case and point, look at Job! When Satan, our adversary, appeared before God after roving across the earth looking for someone to devour, God Himself pointed out JOB! He didn't point out just anyone, He point out Job because He knew he could withstand the fiery trial, and as His Word says, God doesn't allow us to be tempted beyond our ability to endure. Paul taught the struggling Corinthian believers...

1 Corinthians 10:13

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

GET THIS, though. The context of that passage isn't just about general temptation to sin, it's about our RESPONSE TO HARDSHIP! Yes, the wandering nation of Israel struggled with idolatry, drunkenness, and sexual immorality (just like the Corinthians), but they also struggled to honor God in the midst of difficult circumstances. Paul said...

1 Corinthians 10:9-10

9 We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, 10 nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer.

THIS is how they responded when God told them to enter and take the Promised Land! God hadn't bitten off more than He could chew in liberating Israel from Egyptian bondage to serve Him, but to hear Israel complain, YOU'D HAVE THOUGHT HE HAD! In reality, though, He brought the fledgling Nation TO the hardships they faced in the wilderness for a reason, to cause them to **DEPEND UPON HIM** more! Faithful obedience is what passing the test would've looked like, but instead, they grumbled against the leaders God had chosen, even wishing to execute them then and there. Sound familiar? Their desire to commit such a heinous act against God's chosen leaders was to desire to do it to God Himself, and the Nation would get their chance about 1400 years later when the Prophet like Moses, Jesus of Nazareth, showed up. And how did He respond to suffering???

Isaiah 53:7

**He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he opened not his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
so he opened not his mouth.**

Unlike Israel, Jesus **QUIETLY ENDURED** suffering, and so did Job before Him. Is it any wonder that Job's response to suffering was legendary? **"In all this,"** the Bible says, **"Job did not sin with his lips."** We can't say the same for Job's wife. Apart from a later reference to the fact that she couldn't stand Job's breath, this is the last time we see or hear from her except for, perhaps, Job's restoration in the end. He had more children, but we never hear where he gets a new wife, so we can surmise that she makes it through with him, hopefully with her faith restored. The scriptures don't simply come out and say that, and this scene definitely doesn't cast her in a good light. She was suffering alongside her husband, and she wasn't handling it well. We can be quick to throw up our hands at such people, especially when we're suffering ourselves, but their need for love, grace, and patience is unchanged. Job recognized that and showed his wife the love and patience she needed (much better than his supposed "friends" did for him!).

Won't it be something one day to enter glory and see Job AND Mrs. Job beside him! Scripture is quiet regarding how Job's wife fairs through the rest of this trial, but I want to believe she makes it through this trial with him, and I believe there's scriptural evidence to support this view. I love a good story arch, don't you? I figure that's because each of us who is saved is a "good story arch," rebel to follower, enemy to friend, lover of self to lover of God. That's the work that the Holy Spirit is doing in us. Eternity will tell the full story. Until then, we have much growing to do, and Job's experience will teach us, the greatest lesson tonight being that, when we suffer, God hasn't forgotten about us or stopped loving us. The same God who gives us all good things is the same God who allows the bad **FOR A PURPOSE**. As James writes, with the LORD **"there is no variation or shadow DUE TO CHANGE" (Job 1:17)**. God hasn't changed. So, when you struggle to understand the trials that come upon you, remember the

CHARACTER of the One who is in control, and let your understanding of HIS PERFECT CHARACTER give you understanding of what's going on in your life. And, of course, you can't know God's character apart from His Word and from walking in His will in submission to His Spirit...

...So, Father, I pray You'll give us the grace, that supernatural urging to run hard after You in times of peace as well as trial. We cry out to You and draw closer to You in trials, but it's time we spend with You when we're at peace that prepares us to do so. That's what we see in Job's life. He could take the evil with the good because HE KNEW YOU. He knew who You were, so he could trust You. None of us wish to suffer, LORD, but we all recognize that suffering is a part of our existence, and You're powerful and sovereign enough to use it for good. So, I pray You'll teach us through this series not to FEAR suffering, but to SEE IT ARIGHT, the means by which You conform us into the image of Your Son. We ask all of this in His Precious Name above all names, amen.