



JOB'S PRAYER OF ACCEPTANCE

WEEK 9
10.29.17

FOCUS VERSE

Isaiah 55:9

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

LESSON TEXT

Job 42:1-6, 10

1 Then Job answered the LORD, and said,

2 I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee.

3 Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge?

therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.

4 Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.

5 I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.

6 Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

.....

10 And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.

Romans 8:28

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.



FOCUS THOUGHT

Even when we cannot track God's footsteps, we must learn to trust His purpose.



CULTURE CONNECTION

Riches to Rags

People love a good rags-to-riches story. They like to see someone who has had hard luck succeed. They revel in the successes of a Cinderella who catches lightning in a bottle and punches her ticket to fame. These same individuals often despise those who have achieved wealth. They rejoice when the wealthy fall. Sometimes it is difficult to tell which story the world loves more: a rags-to-riches story or a riches-to-rags story.

Many people gravitate towards narratives about the mighty falling. They enjoy seeing people descend from their ivory towers and crash-land among the common folk. Too many of these people have golden parachutes, so the ones who actually come down

to earth are few and far between.

Sadly, some people also love to see an Apostolic believer fall. When they hear of a backslider, they are ready with an “I told you so!” They claim that they knew the person’s faith would not last and accuse that individual of being fake.

If Job’s so-called friends could treat a righteous man so poorly, then it is no surprise that people often judge the fallen harshly. Although backsliders may have lost the riches of Christ, believers need to cover them with prayer in the hope that they will someday put on Christ again (Galatians 3:27). But if backsliders are too put off by their critics, they may never return to God.

OUTLINE

I. JOB’S FAITHFULNESS

- A. Job’s Lifestyle of Faithfulness
- B. Job’s Test

II. JOB’S DILEMMA

- A. Curse God and Die or Trust God and Live?
- B. All Things Work Together for Good

III. JOB’S PRAYER

- A. Job Had Great Respect for God
- B. Job’s Prayer Revealed His Acceptance of God’s Sovereignty
- C. Resulted in Repentance
- D. Resulted in Reconciliation
- E. God Blessed Job

CONTEMPLATING THE TOPIC

The Bible describes Job as a blameless, upright, God-fearing man who avoided evil and cleaved to the good. Job’s impeccable reputation prevented anyone from questioning his loyalty to God. Although his so-called friends may have envied him, they could find no fault in him. Yet Satan stepped forward to challenge Job’s motivations, claiming Job only revered the Lord because he wanted

the continued protection of the Almighty. The Lord saw an opportunity not only to teach the adversary a lesson, but also to impart greater knowledge to Job and to confront a widely held belief about the nature of sin and punishment.

The adversary characterized Job as an individual more devoted to his rituals than to his God. Job so greatly feared the Lord that he offered burnt offerings for his children just in case they had cursed God in their hearts. He tried to manage the unseen world of their thoughts and protect them from iniquity. God surrounded Job with His protection, and Job emulated his Creator by covering his children’s transgressions.

Satan viewed this perceived strength of Job as a chance to pit God against one of His favorite servants. Seeking and attaining permission from the Lord to attack the great man, Satan sought to prove that Job served God for the wrong reasons. The enemy firmly believed he could pressure Job into vocally cursing God for all the troubles that would befall him.

Satan probably knew that he could rely on Job’s friends to declare him guilty of sin even though Job had done nothing wrong.

Satan knew that the friends believed in a widely held concept known as the Doctrine of the Two Ways, which simply stated that the good are rewarded and the wicked are punished. Most people in Job's day interpreted any hardship or calamity as a punishment for sin. The Book of Job, however, proves that sometimes bad things happen to good people. In fact, God uses these situations to help the righteous learn more about the nature of God and to increase their trust in Him.

Job never cursed God, but he spent much of the book acting like a prosecuting attorney, questioning the Lord and engaging Him in fierce debates. Job desired to take control of his situation by challenging the Almighty. In spite of the arguments that he presented, Job ultimately prayed a prayer of acceptance because he came to realize that God reigned sovereign over all aspects of life—both the good and the bad. Although Job kept his mind on the Lord, he could come nowhere close to understanding the thoughts of the Almighty. Even though Job tried to act righteously, he learned that his honorable behavior could never measure up to the virtues of the Lord. The Book of Job reveals that we must trust in God when our understanding fails us. An invisible God sometimes has hidden motives, and we must learn to rely on Him even when we have no answer to the question why.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

I. JOB'S FAITHFULNESS

A. Job's Lifestyle of Faithfulness

The Bible describes Job as a man without peer. Job personified faithfulness, exemplifying the characteristics that made even the Lord take notice. Pleased by Job's loyalty, God praised Job to Satan, letting the adversary know how much He valued the great man.

Satan, however, felt unimpressed by Job. He believed that Job served not out of integrity or fidelity but because he valued his possessions. Satan surmised that if Job lost all his blessings, he would curse God. When Satan proposed that God allow disaster to overtake Job, the accuser of the brethren felt confident the righteous man would fail. He

would bring the one upright man in all the earth to his knees—not in a pious prayer, but in a fury of curses.

B. Job's Test

God allowed the unthinkable to happen to Job and his family. He removed the hedge of protection from the pure man and permitted the enemy to attack him. Nevertheless He kept the adversary on a leash. He had one caveat: Satan could not kill Job.

Job's response to the devastating events reveals both his spirituality and his humanity. Job engaged in an act of ritual mourning, tearing his garment in two, shaving his head, and falling on the ground. Job's words, however, proved that he was not merely a robot to ritual, repeating preprogrammed words. Instead of cursing God, he proclaimed, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" (Job 1:21). Stripped of his clothes and his hedge of protection, Job found refuge in the strong tower that is the name of the Lord.

In spite of Job's bold blessing in the midst of fierce adversity, Satan continued to doubt Job's intentions. The enemy told the Lord that Job only cared about himself. If he were to suffer physically, then he would curse God. The Lord allowed Satan to strike at Job's body, but He forbade him to kill Job.

II. JOB'S DILEMMA

A. Curse God and Die or Trust God and Live?

Job had no idea why God had allowed a string of horrific events to befall him. The pain felt so intense that he may have started feeling numb to it as he experienced shock after shock. But while he received report after report from the lone servants who survived the various onslaughts, Heaven remained silent. While Satan had questioned whether Job feared God for naught, Job may have started asking the same thing, but with a different spin on the question. Had all of his sacrifices and faithfulness to God been for nothing?

One question haunted him even more: Should he curse God and die? His wife

suggested this dangerous option. But rather than taking her advice, Job stood firm in his faith. In the midst of perplexing questions for which he could find no answers, he asked questions that he knew he could answer: “What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” (Job 2:10).

In spite of the fact that many of his contemporaries believed punishment signified sin, Job knew he had not transgressed against the Lord. He examined his heart and his actions and came to the conclusion that sometimes even the good suffer. Job could not explain his present circumstances, but he knew that the God who provided all the good things in life had allowed catastrophe to overtake him. He just wished he understood why.

B. All Things Work Together for Good

Sadly, Job did not have access to Romans 8:28: “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” Even those who like to quote this verse of Scripture sometimes misinterpret it. Paul did not say all things will be good; rather, he wrote that all things “work together” and the result is good. Therefore believers must look at the totality of their walk with God and not allow the trials and tests that occasionally come up to cloud their judgment about the Lord’s goodness and mercy.

Although Job has served as a prime example of the reality of Romans 8:28 for generations of believers, the man without peer had no contemporaries to look to for guidance. Job, however, was not the only person to face overwhelming troubles.

Joseph is a good example. (See Genesis 50:20.) Joseph represented an individual who faced different trials and tests. Joseph suffered kidnapping and being sold into slavery by his jealous brothers before gaining prominence in Potiphar’s house, only to be falsely accused of rape. Just when Joseph thought he understood God’s purpose, he found himself imprisoned for a crime he did not commit.

Joseph endured many trials before rising in power and having the opportunity to confront his brothers. For a while, he toyed

with them. Perhaps he could not make up his mind as to what he should actually do to them. Like Job’s friends, they seemingly deserved to be punished. Joseph, however, saw the larger plan of God. He told his brothers, “But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive” (Genesis 50:20). Joseph learned to see the big picture and look past the hurts caused by his siblings.

Even though Joseph’s problems began because of his poor relationship with his brothers, Joseph never neglected his relationship with God. Relationship is more important than whether God performs the way we think He should. For example, we will determine to continue to love Him if He never heals our bodies. It is our choice to love God even when things are not going right in our lives.

Paul recognized that the Lord would preserve him no matter what difficulties he faced (II Corinthians 4:8–18) and that sometimes bad things happen to further the gospel (Philippians 1:12–21). Paul understood that through prayer and praise, God reveals His purpose to us (Ephesians 1:3–14).

Job, Joseph, and Paul serve as outstanding examples of perseverance and trust in the face of adversity.

III. JOB’S PRAYER

A. Job Had Great Respect for God

Sometimes God’s purpose can be difficult to understand because God exists in a dimension beyond our earthly understanding. Isaiah wrote about God’s sovereignty: “Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure” (Isaiah 46:10). Even though Job struggled to understand the divine plan behind his sufferings, he still revered God. He recognized the immense power of the Lord.

Job said, “I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee” (Job 42:2). This verse may reveal Job’s understanding of both God’s omnipotence and omniscience: the Lord has the power to do everything and know everything.

Another translation of the verse may reinforce Job's belief in God's omnipotence because it renders the second line to mean that God cannot be stopped. Whatever the case, Job had no doubt that he served a great, powerful, and knowledgeable God.

B. Job's Prayer Revealed His Acceptance of God's Sovereignty

Although Job did not curse God, he challenged the Lord. Unlike the adversary, he recognized his infinite fallibility in the presence of the everlasting God. Job had raised objections like a lawyer, but he ultimately realized that he could not mount a defense against God because he lacked the knowledge and perfection of the Lord.

Proverbs 30:2-4 records the difficulties of humanity trying to indict the Lord: "Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy. Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?" God asked Job similar questions in order to demonstrate His power and majesty.

After his stint as a prosecuting attorney, Job saw the tables turned as the Lord put him on the witness stand and cross-examined him. When the Lord had the chance to speak, He questioned Job. As a result, the righteous sufferer recognized that in spite of his pursuit of holiness, he could never measure up to God. And yet, in the midst of all of his hardships, he received an incalculable blessing: he saw God. Previously, he had only heard about the Lord. This knowledge initially led him to serve the Lord, but seeing the Almighty brought him into a new dimension in his relationship with God.

C. Resulted in Repentance

This revelation helped Job to overcome his shortcomings. He withdrew his case against the Lord and repented in dust and ashes. He began his trial sitting in ashes, saying the right words about not cursing God. At the end of his ordeal, he once again found himself in

ashes. This time, however, he went beyond saying the correct things. His revelation of the greatness of God led him to repentance. His example challenges those who face a season of affliction to recognize the power of God in the midst of their powerlessness and to respond in the correct way.

D. Resulted in Reconciliation

God gave Job another chance to see things from the divine perspective by allowing him not only to be the forgiven, but also to be the forgiver. The Lord called on Job to pray for his friends who probably did not deserve one word spoken on their behalf. Job might have found it difficult to follow the words of the psalmist who wrote of his enemies, "But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother" (Psalm 35:13-14). The words of Proverbs 25:21-22 could have proved equally difficult for Job: "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee."

Job may have felt that his reward was to punish his friends for their misconduct. Friends are supposed to be there for their compatriots when tragedy befalls them. Perhaps Job felt anger and had hurt feelings at the way his so-called friends had treated him. While Job threw out his case against the Lord, he could have justifiably begun proceedings against his friends, berating them for their horrible behavior in the midst of his calamity.

Job's friends had certainly done wrong. They may have deserved any punishment awaiting them. Nevertheless, Job overcame his hurt and anger. Showing the same mercy the Lord had shown him, Job prayed for his friends (Job 42:10). This prayer turned the tide in Job's life. His supplication for his friends opened the door for blessings to flow. Job also became a blessing.

Those hearing Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount might even have tied one familiar portion of it to the life of Job: "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them

that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which spitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matthew 5:44). Job had seen his blessed life cursed, but he refused to allow hate and spite to destroy him. He held fast to his relationship with his friends and his God.

E. God Blessed Job

Blessing God rather than cursing, and forgiving his persecutors rather than prosecuting them enriched Job spiritually and materially. Although no amount of possessions or new children could replace the loved ones Job had lost, the Lord honored Job’s perseverance. Fiscally, the Lord gave him twice as much as he had previously possessed. The Lord also blessed him with seven sons and three daughters. His relatives and acquaintances brought gifts to him when they came to visit. Perhaps they received a greater reward from Job because he showed them that life’s difficulties could not always be traced to sin. This new understanding of the Doctrine of the Two Ways restored Job’s reputation. Others realized that every bad situation could not be attributed to the sin of an individual. Sometimes even the most just individual faced perplexing situations.

In spite of what his life had taught others, Job himself had learned a lesson that few ever receive the opportunity to experience. Job’s prayer of repentance offered him a new vision of God that this blameless and upright man had not previously seen in spite of all his good works. Others had a new revelation about sin, reward, and punishment. Job, however, had a revelation that could only come from seeing God and communing with Him in a relationship that went far beyond rituals, sacrifices, or mere words. Job knew God on a higher level, comprehending Him in a way that only the greats like Abraham, Joseph, and Moses could. His knowledge about God came not merely from facts he knew about the Almighty, but from a relationship that had withstood an incredible test and had blossomed into something new and more powerful.

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

Satan wanted to attack Job because he believed that the upright man possessed a haughty spirit of entitlement rather than the spirit of a humble worshiper. Satan felt sure that Job’s place of privilege would lead him to cursing rather than a place of acceptance and repentance. Through the help of the Lord and his own perseverance, Job proved Satan wrong. He also succeeded because he had a mature relationship with God that could sustain him through prosperity and paucity.

In this modern world filled with entitlement, the story of Job challenges all of us to examine our hearts. Although Job proved Satan wrong, his accusations against Job might fit if applied to us. Do we serve God only during the good times? Do we feel that we are entitled to the blessings of God? Do we move away from God during seasons of difficulty? Do we develop a spirit of unbelief when God does not act as we think He should?

Some in the world today claim they have become atheists because God did not step in to stop a mass shooting, a terrorist attack, or a personal tragedy. They refuse to believe in the existence of a God who does not intervene. But Job disproved their ideas. Sometimes God inexplicably remains silent in the face of tragedy.

Rather than accepting that God sometimes acts in this manner, some choose not to believe. Rather than trusting in a Lord who sometimes remains silent, they speak out against Him. But are these individuals truly atheists? Do they not believe in God at all—or are they simply disappointed in the God who is?

Sadly, these self-proclaimed atheists gravitate toward complete unbelief at the very moment the Lord could be desiring to grant them a greater revelation of Himself. Many sacrifice a lifelong relationship with a faithful and loving God over one instance in which God did not meet their expectations. Their lack of acceptance leads to complete denial of the Lord.

Job’s prayer of acceptance challenges all of us to leave the courtroom and find the prayer room. We may feel as if we have an open-and-shut case against the Lord. We

may feel justified in putting God on trial and treating Him as a hostile witness. However, our sense of being right pales in comparison to the righteousness of God. Our feelings of justification come nowhere close to the justification that we have through the blood of

Jesus. Once we leave the courtroom and enter the prayer room, hopefully we will receive a revelation of God that sends us to the right court. Free of our anger, doubt, confusion, and entitlement, we can enter His courts with praise. ■

REFLECTIONS

- Job's friends believed that the good are rewarded and the wicked are punished. In what cases might this be true? In what cases might this be an incomplete understanding of the nature of God?
- In our relationship with God, we can sometimes feel that the Lord has wronged us. How do you face situations where the Lord's actions differ from your expectations?
- Job's friends behaved poorly when they saw him suffering. How should we react to both friends and enemies who are facing difficulties?
- People in today's world have a lot to say about God. Many claim to know Him, and yet it seems as though few have a solid understanding of Him. How can we truly get to know the Lord better—especially when His thinking and His ways are so much higher than our own?
- The blessings of God and our service to the kingdom may sometimes make us feel as though we are entitled to having good things happen to us. How do we combat a spirit of entitlement in a world obsessed with materialism?