

## Tempered by Trials

### Sermon # 10

#### Job: Tempted to Doubt God's Goodness!

We are often guilty of trying to second guess God. And when others are going through trials we are often tempted to act as if we know how to explain the plans of an Almighty God. But in fact our minds wrestle in vain to explain the unexplainable. When are unable to solve the mysteries that confront us we can allow unanswered questions to rob us of our joy.

It may be a tragedy that thrust us headlong into depression. Or it may be that we have experienced hurt from a relationship. Whatever it may be it can cause us to doubt the power or goodness of God.

Tonight in our "Tempered by Trials" series we are introduced to a man named Job who though a godly man was tempted to doubt God's goodness!

In Job 1:1 we read, *"There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil. (2) And seven sons and three daughters were born to him. (3) Also, his possessions were seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and a very large household, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the East."*

Job is a rich man who owns thousands of sheep, camels, cattle, and donkeys. He's also blessed with a large family of 10 children.

Here is a man that is described as *"blameless and upright"* meaning complete and balanced. *"Fearing god"* means to respect who God is, and what God says. Oswald Chambers says, *"the remarkable thing about fearing God is that when you fear God you fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God you fear everything else!"* Yet in spite of his goodness he still under went trials.

#### Job's Trials (1:13-19)

Then one fateful day, a series of messengers arrive to give Job disturbing news (1:13-19). First, the news arrives that raiders have taken his herds and killed his servants. Then news that a windstorm had destroyed the house where his children are eating, killing everyone. In one single day he lost everything. Then when you think nothing further can happen to poor Job, he breaks out with skin ulcers all over his body, and his health is destroyed (2:7-8).

#### Job's Comforters (Friends) (2:11-37:24)

In Job 2:11-13 we read, *“Now when Job’s three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, each one came from his own place—Eliphaz ..., Bildad ..., and Zophar .... For they had made an appointment together to come and mourn with him, and to comfort him. (12) And when they raised their eyes from afar, and did not recognize him, they lifted their voices and wept; and each one tore his robe and sprinkled dust on his head toward heaven. (13) So they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great.”*

Job’s friends enter the picture in Chapter two and verse eleven, they and their advice runs all the way through the end of Chapter thirty-seven. We have all heard it said, *“with friends like that who needs enemies!”* In fact, the phrase could have been coined to describe the friends of Job. “Job’s comforters” is the cynical title given to Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar and later the young man Elihu. Sometimes people are presented in the Bible simply to show us what NOT to do!

Tonight, we will cover these friends only in broad strokes. They make an appointment to come comfort and help Job. To their credit when they first came they just sat with Job, they didn’t say a word for one whole week, they just wept with him. But then they opened their mouths and sought to “counsel” Job and thing went down hill from there. Friends came to comfort him, but add to his misery by insisting he must have committed some horrible sin for which God is punishing him.

1<sup>st</sup> Friend – Eliphaz – (Chap. 4& 5, 15, 22) based all his counsel on his own spiritual experience. They are the one’s who say, *“I know exactly how you feel.”*

Truth to apprehend – everybody’s situation is different and we do not know exactly how another human being feels.

2<sup>nd</sup> Friend – Bildad – ( Ch 8, 18, 25) a man who had all the clichés down pat. He represents the Christian who has a handy answer and Scripture to quote for every problem. In times of crisis and trouble in the lives of our friends and families we feel compelled as “the” Christian witness in our family to have an answer for every problem and situation. All too often in attempting to do so we find ourselves offering platitudes and clichés. Like, *“God’s way is always best,”* or quoting Romans 8:28 *“All things work together for good!”* We intend to help, but may instead end up hurting the very one we wanted to help.

Truth to apprehend – sometimes there are no apparent or easy answers to life’s problems.

3<sup>rd</sup> Friend – Zophar - (Ch 11, 20)

He was extremely dogmatic. He felt as if he had arrived, spiritually speaking.

What mistakes do the friends of Job make?

First, they try to reply to the words of Job without understanding the hurts of Job. The fail to enter into Jobs' sorrows, they fail to sympathize and empathize with him.

Secondly, they have a very incomplete understanding of God. They had a very rigid concept of how God works. As Derek Kidner states, *"The basic error of Job's friends is that they overestimate their grasp of truth, misapply the truth they know, and close their minds to any facts that contradict what they assume."* [Derek Kidner, *The Wisdom*, p. 61]

Ray Stedman advances the idea that, *"Their theology was right as far as it went, but it was very incomplete. They never seemed aware of that. They always spoke with the utmost confidence that what they were saying was the final word on the subject. There was no apparent under-standing that perhaps there were aspects of God and dimensions to His Word that they had not yet seen."* [Ray Stedman, *"The Folly of Platitudes"* p. 4]

Third, there is never any indication that they appeal to God for help for themselves in understanding Job's problem. They never pray with Job. They never ask God to help them to understand. Although the book of Job is filled with prayers, they are all the prayers of Job crying out to God in his sufferings. Job speaks to God (7:7-21), his friends speak about God. His friends would have been better to talk to God about their friend than talking about God to Job.

Whether we acknowledge it or not we all need Christian or Spiritual friends, people who will walk with us through life's hardest moments and who will point us to God without preaching at us or judging our spirituality. But most of us are lonely, we may have a lot of acquaintances and a few friends but we are fortunate if we have one true Christian friend. A Spiritual friend is One who walks with you on your spiritual journey, encouraging you in your life of faith, fanning the coals of your passion for God, listening to your heart, cultivating the life of prayer. IT IS NOT Counseling, Directing, Judging, Not even teaching. IT IS a side by side relationship of trust, with one to whom you can share an unedited version of your innermost life.

Job's Vindication (Job 42:12-13)

*"Now the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; for he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand female donkeys. (13) He also had seven sons and three daughters."*

Job faith is vindicated yet he never learned why God permitted him to suffer. Job did come to know God better, and perhaps this is an underlying purpose in all suffering. Through suffering, we are forced to face the mystery of God, and challenged to trust Him deeper. The Job who emerged from the crucible of pain had a deeper trust in God than the Job who entered it. May it be the same for us, when we, too, face the hurts that are a part of every human life. In the meanwhile, there are other lessons we can learn from Job as well.

First, Job's story reminds us that we are always under the watchful eye of a loving Father God. Nothing happens in the life of the believer that has not first passed through the hand of God, only what He permits is allowed to pass through. In this we can take comfort. Knowing God's love, we can be certain any pain He permits is for our good.

Secondly, Job's story reminds us that experiences we cannot understand provide the greatest opportunities to exercise faith. Faith is proven to be genuine only when it is tested. As Peter reminded us, a faith that passes the test is more precious than gold (1 Pet. 1:7).

Third, Job's story reminds us that God has multiplied blessings in store for us. We may not find these blessings in this life, as Job did, but they are there for us. They are reserved in heaven, awaiting only the coming of our Lord (James 5:7–11).