

18. Lessons from the Book of Job

August 26, 2012

We've been studying this great Book of Job for last four months. We joked about getting "Job Insurance" because many of our congregation were tested and tried by the storms of life. I applaud you all for standing firm in your faith in Jesus Christ. I remember what that big fisherman apostle Peter answered to the Lord Jesus when the Lord asked if they, the disciples too, were going to leave Him in John 6:

John 6:68 But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69 Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

In these last three chapters of the Book, we are not going to spend a great deal of time to figure out the identities of two creatures that were mentioned in chapter 40 and 41. I read the commentaries by some well-known biblical scholars who were insisting that Behemoth was a hippopotamus and Leviathan was a crocodile. They were very adamant about their theory.

However, I find a couple of discrepancies between their theory and the actual animals:

For Behemoth, please go to:

Job 40:17 He moves his tail like a cedar; The sinews of his thighs are tightly knit.

Have you ever seen the tail of a hippo? Does that look like a cedar tree to you? I think not. It looks like a half eaten Italian sausage.

For Leviathan, please go to:

Job 41:19-21 Out of his mouth go burning lights; Sparks of fire shoot out. 20 Smoke goes out of his nostrils, As from a boiling pot and burning rushes. 21 His breath kindles coals, And a flame goes out of his mouth.

When was the last time you saw a crocodile spew fire out of his mouth? Whatever it is, according to chapter 41, there was no one or nothing could overcome it. If you concentrate your study on the identities of these two extraordinary creatures in this Book, you are missing the point of what God wanted us to understand.

The purpose of mentioning these two creatures to Job was that God who created these two creatures and Job who couldn't even control them were not on the same level to argue as Job thought.

A. JOB'S CONFESSION

Job 42:1-6 Then Job answered the Lord and said: 2 "I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. 3 You asked, 'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. 4 Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, 'I will question you, and you shall answer Me.' 5 "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You. 6 Therefore I abhor myself, And repent in dust and ashes."

When the Lord showed Himself to Job in chapter 38, He didn't heal Job from his boils that covered him from head to toe right away. But in the awesome presence of God, those boils were the least concerns Job had in mind.

We often struggle to understand God's timeline when it comes to making right an injustice that has been done to His people. Charles Beard, one of the most influential American historians of the first half of the 20th century said, "The mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceedingly small." Amen?

God created us to want justice, equity, and fairness. But like Job, none of us want to wait for it next day, next month, next year, or in eternity. We always want it now.

Here when Job realized that he said the things way out of line against the Lord, he repented very quickly.

B. SEVEN PRINCIPLES FOR OUR CHRISTIAN LIVING

If we think that the Book of Job was a chronicle of a suffering man, we miss the whole point that God has for us.

I find seven principles we can take for our Christian living from this Book:

1) We never know ahead of time the plans God has for us.

As we read in chapter 1, his fateful day started just like any other morning, then he went through the most horrendous experiences imaginable. Yet even on that darkest of days, Job clung to his faith in God's love and His divine sovereignty.

The Lord promises to us that when we seek Him, He will be found by us. He promised to hear our prayers and to respond with grace, love, peace, and forgiveness.

Jeremiah 29:13 And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.

2) A vertical perspective will keep us from horizontal panic.

Job never once blamed God for his suffering and he also knew that God provided his only hope for restoration.

3) Great discernment is needed to detect wrong advice from a well-meaning person.

Remember what his lovely wife suggested Job do in chapter 2:

Job 2:9 Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!"

She meant to help end his suffering, but it was not a very good suggestion. She actually encouraged him to do what satan wanted him to do. But Job refused to compromise his faith in God.

4) When things turn from bad to worse, sound theology helps us remain strong and stable.

Job went from losing everything he owned and all of his children in a matter of short hours to being struck with the infirmities on the entire body. He looked like a walking corpse. But he remained strong in the Lord.

Knowing God's Word and having a strong relationship with Him provide us a shelter from life's storms. The knowledge and wisdom that we glean from the Bible enable us to stand on God's truth when trials and tests come along.

5) Sensitive and caring friends know when to show up, when to stay quiet, and what to say when the time is right.

Job's three friends left the comfort of their homes and came to Job and shared in the depth of his grief. They comforted him with their presence and silence, until they opened their big fat mouths. From then, everything went down the drain.

Even a small gesture like a simple touch, a pat on the back, a sympathetic squeeze of a hand, or a whispered prayer can make an enormous difference in the life of a suffering person.

6) It is easy to be “armchair quarterbacks” when we encounter and respond to another’s suffering.

When we rush in to fix the suffering of others, no matter how insightful we might be, we really don’t understand the full nature of our friends’ problem. Or they may not want our advice, but just our presence with them. Thirdly, their suffering may have nothing to do with self-inflicted consequence, but have everything to do with the Lord’s customized spiritual training course for them.

As these people go through suffering, their lives are often transformed, deepened, and marked with God’s beauty and holiness.

7) The cultivation of obedient endurance is a mark of maturity.

Faith can not be taught in the classroom or gained from any of our human books. It only comes through real-life situations. ‘Sight’ IS NOT ‘faith.’ We constantly want God to show us His will for our lives even though we see His faithfulness plainly in the past. But the Lord will bring forth the result of His promises in His way and in His time. He DOES NOT need our help; rather we need His help.

The silence of God doesn’t mean that He is late, or inactive, or not working, or not caring. It means that this is where and how our faith must work its way to Him.

Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

C. SEVEN ASPECTS OF GOD’S CHARACTER

This time we can learn seven aspects of God’s character from Job’s faith.

1) There is nothing God cannot do.

We limit what God can do in our lives due to our lack of faith in Him. This has nothing to do with the Word of Faith Movement which is an absolute heresy.

2) It is impossible to restrain or ignore God’s purpose.

No matter what humans declare, God’s intentions and purposes can be neither altered nor disrupted. There is nothing in the universe that can change them.

Nothing surprises God. He knows the past hurts, regrets, and sorrows that we carry within us. He is keenly aware of our present needs – emotional, physical, and spiritual. He foresees what we are going to do, say, and even think before we form our thoughts. Some might say, “That’s impossible.” Precisely! That is why He is God.

3) God’s plans are beyond our understanding and too deep for us to explain.

If we are truly honest, we must say, “There are times we are disappointed with God,” because the Lord doesn’t do the things as we think that He should. We recognize that He has a plan for our lives, but we are not included in planning and executing. It means that we have no control over His plan for our lives. Many of us don’t like that idea at all.

We don't know what to do next. We don't understand why certain things happen to some people and not others.

We tend to channel our disappointment with life's circumstances into a misguided disappointment with God. What we don't realize is that God is the only One who will NEVER disappoint us. He always is the same.

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

4) By nature, we all are selfish and proud people. Only through God's Word are we able to humble ourselves and rest in His will.

The more we get to know our God through His Word, the Bible, the more we get to know how much we need Him and the less we are impressed with ourselves.

5) When we get to heaven, we will realize that the Lord is always fair.

Not a single idle thought, word, or action slips His attention. According to His timetable, He blesses those who walk with Him and punishes severely unbelievers and wrongdoers.

Hebrews 6:10 For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

6) No one can be compared to God when it comes to giving blessings.

Job 42:10-12a And the Lord restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. 11 Then all his brothers, all his sisters, and all those who had been his acquaintances before, came to him and ate food with him in his house; and they consoled him and comforted him for all the adversity that the Lord had brought upon him. Each one gave him a piece of silver and each a ring of gold. 12 Now the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning

Notice the Lord restored, increased, and blessed. The Lord blessed Job with a double portion in everything with the exception of his children. Having twenty children can be a curse.

7) Only God can give us true freedom in Jesus Christ.

Not every Christian believer's story ends with a happy ending like Job's. Some of our brothers and sisters die because of their illness, seemingly freak accidents, or get killed in persecution. But please remember this: the death of Christians is not the end of the story, rather it is the beginning of a new life in heaven with Jesus Christ.

As we have traced the steps of Job's journey, his remarkable faith has become part of our lives. Let's apply what we've learned from this Book into our lives so that our hearts are equipped with biblical principles and vital faith lessons that will bring forth spiritual fruits when we endure similar trials.

James 1:12 Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

We just finished 55 Books out of the 66 Books of the Bible. The next Book will be the Book of Ephesians. I am so looking forward to studying it with you. Please start to read ahead. It takes less than 20 minutes to read the whole Book. I am challenging you to read it once a day everyday – 20 minutes out of 1440 minutes of a day. I will do the same. Starting tomorrow.