

8. Hope in the midst of hopelessness

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At this point of Job's life, he was totally hopeless. To make the matter worse, his so-called friends' verbal barrage started to pound his exposed and wounded heart.

The worst part of the whole ordeal was that the heaven was so silent that it was deafening to Job. Not a word from the very God whom he adored and worshiped all of his life. The worst fear of Job was not that he lost his wealth, health, or even his children, or he lost faith in God, because he didn't; rather God might have lost faith in him and no longer had the Lord wanted anything to do with him.

It has been said that people can survive without food for forty days; without water four days; without oxygen four minutes; but without hope, no one can survive even four seconds.

Think about it. What good is it for our future if we have absolutely nothing to look forward to? It is no wonder why those who don't have Christ in their hearts as the Savior and Lord live in this world as if there is no tomorrow and no hope. Actually, there is no hope for them unless they turn to God. When they sin against God, what they are doing is the only natural and "make-sense" thing to them.

Chapters 6 and 7 contain Job's response to Eliphaz's condemning speech in chapter 4 and 5. Job cried out in utter despair at the hurtful words of his friend. We cannot help but notice the complete hopelessness in his dialogue. Yet he still maintained his innocence.

I believe that the Lord is going to teach us about holding onto Jesus who is our Eternal Blessed Hope, because He is our All in all.

A. IS GOD AGAINST ME?

Job 6:1-4 Then Job answered and said: 2 "Oh, that my grief were fully weighed, And my calamity laid with it on the scales! 3 For then it would be heavier than the sand of the sea-- Therefore my words have been rash. 4 For the arrows of the Almighty are within me; My spirit drinks in their poison; The terrors of God are arrayed against me.

Only Eliphaz had spoken so far, but Job could tell by looking at the faces of Bildad and Zophar that they agreed with him. Not one of his friends identified with what Job was going through physically and emotionally. It was one thing for them to sit where he sat and quite something else for them to feel what he felt.

Once they felt that they had done their duty as friends by being in silence for seven days, they felt that it also was their duty to judge Job for his possible hidden sins and expose them to him. That is why they didn't feel the heaviness of his suffering in v1 through 3, nor did they understand the bitterness of his suffering.

To add insult to injury, Job felt like that God declared an open season on him and was taking pot shots at him with poison arrows. The idea made his spirit bitter.

Have you ever been there? Have you ever felt that God is against you and He has nothing to do with you and no longer loves you? You felt completely hopeless and felt that you are the utter failure of God. Maybe you are in that situation right now.

But ask yourself: "Where do I find any verse in the Bible that mentions my God's hatred against me?" You don't find it anywhere. Then, ask yourself another question: "If this thought didn't come from the Lord, who could possibly put it in my heart?" No, duh!?!? Let me give you a hint. His name starts with 's'. That's right, it is satan.

Jeremiah 29:11-12 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. 12 Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.
Romans 8:31b If God is for us, who can be against us?

Don't let your spiritual ears be given to satan. He speaks lies that sound so right and so true while they are nothing more than sugar coated condemnation and shame.

B. HOPELESSNESS THAT LEADS TO USELESSNESS

Job 6:8-13 "Oh, that I might have my request, That God would grant me the thing that I long for! 9 That it would please God to crush me, That He would loose His hand and cut me off! 10 Then I would still have comfort; Though in anguish, I would exult, He will not spare; For I have not concealed the words of the Holy One. 11 "What strength do I have, that I should hope? And what is my end, that I should prolong my life? 12 Is my strength the strength of stones? Or is my flesh bronze? 13 Is my help not within me? And is success driven from me?"

Job tried to get his friends to understand his hopelessness. Prolonged and intense suffering can make a person feel powerless to handle life, and this can lead to hopelessness.

If you can't control some of the elements that make up life, how can you plan for the future? Hopelessness can lead to a feeling of uselessness; and when you feel useless, you don't want to live. This explains why Job wanted God to take his life.

The rendition of NKJV in v13 almost gives us some New Ages idea if you take this verse out of context. But we should not think that Job is like a motivational self-help guru from 'Lala Land' encouraging himself to look within for hidden help. Instead these words from the pain-wracked man sitting on a burned-out place in a garbage dump indicate Job's absolute sense of helplessness. If Job's only help is within him, then he has no help. Indeed, all success was driven from him.

I like the NIV rendition:

Job 6:13 Do I have any power to help myself, now that success has been driven from me? NIV

Job didn't attempt kill himself, because he knew that suicide was wrong. But he prayed that God might take him out of his misery. Job's friends were healthy and comfortable and didn't know the burden of waking up each morning to another day of suffering. Job's strength was gone, and he felt useless.

I know that some of you in our congregation live with pains and sufferings physically and emotionally beyond what the rest of us can possibly imagine. If I were the one who is going through that kind of difficulty day in day out, I probably would be in far worse situation emotionally than you. I wouldn't even venture to say, "I know what you go through," because I can not even fathom it.

But if I may say one thing with all due respect, please don't give up on God. He is faithful and He does know exactly how much you can take. Don't give in to that temptation to quit.

1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

C. A GLIMPSE OF JOB'S PHYSICAL CONDITION

Job 7:1-6 "Is there not a time of hard service for man on earth? Are not his days also like the days of a hired man? 2 Like a servant who earnestly desires the shade, And like a hired man who eagerly looks for his wages, 3 So I have been allotted months of futility, And wearisome nights have been appointed to me. 4 When I lie down, I say, 'When shall I arise, And the night be ended?' For I have had my fill of tossing till dawn. 5 My flesh is caked with worms and dust, My skin is cracked and breaks out afresh. 6 "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, And are spent without hope.

During Job's time, workers got paid at the end of each day. So they had something to look forward to while they were working in the field under the hot sun. But Job had none of that. His nights were sleepless, his days were futile, and the Lord didn't seem to care. Then, he mentioned about the brevity of life, time was passing swiftly.

Here we get the first glimpse of Job's physical condition. His body was covered with worms, probably maggots, and dusts. Then the boils on his entire body cracked and breaks out afresh. That would be a living hell in itself, wouldn't you agree?

Please note what Job said in v3:

Job 7:3 So I have been allotted months of futility, And wearisome nights have been appointed to me.

By reading the Bible, we can think that everything happens one after another in fast succession. But according to Job, he had been in this situation for months before these guys got there. Can you imagine suffering that long time?

D. WHAT IS MAN?

Job 7:11-21 "Therefore I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. 12 Am I a sea, or a sea serpent, That You set a guard over me? 13 When I say, 'My bed will comfort me, My couch will ease my complaint,' 14 Then You scare me with dreams And terrify me with visions, 15 So that my soul chooses strangling And death rather than my body. 16 I loathe my life; I would not live forever. Let me alone, For my days are but a breath. 17 "What is man, that You should exalt him, That You should set Your heart on him, 18 That You should visit him every morning, And test him every moment? 19 How long? Will You not look away from me, And let me alone till I swallow my saliva? 20 Have I sinned? What have I done to You, O watcher of men? Why have You set me as Your target, So that I am a burden to myself? 21 Why then do You not pardon my transgression, And take away my iniquity? For now I will lie down in the dust, And You will seek me diligently, But I will no longer be."

Job here cried out to God, first wondering if he were not a dangerous creature – as sea, or a sea serpent – that needed to be guarded and restrained by God.

While I was preparing this study, at the beginning, I thought that the Lord was inflicting Job as he described. I was wrong. The Lord was not doing anything against

him, rather it was satan who was constantly harassing him even throughout the nights. He would not let Job have rest day or night.

In v20-21, Job closed his appeal with a request for forgiveness. It was not a confession of sin, for Job still maintained his integrity and innocence; but it was an opportunity for God to deal with areas in Job's life that he knew nothing about.

Psalm 19:12-14 Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. 13 Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; Let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, And I shall be innocent of great transgression. 14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.

Though Job was respectful to the Lord, he was full of questions toward Him just like any one of us who goes through difficult times of our lives. Isn't it true? The words of Job can bring immense comfort for the simple reason that many sufferers have felt rage but have been too ashamed to express it. God already knows your hearts.

At this point, you might be saying, "Well, I have a lot of questions for God. When I get to heaven I'm going to ask Him all of my questions. In fact, I've got a list." You just keep that list with you. Take it with you everywhere you go, and then if you die unexpectedly, you'll have it handy to pull out and ask God when you stand before Him. Or you can text to Him now if you'd like. The phone number is 777-Got?2God.

Somehow, I don't think that's the way it will be. When you arrive in heaven, when you see your Creator, your God, your Savior in all His blazing glory, you'll forget all about your little list of questions. Our sorrows and heartaches, heavy as they weigh on our souls, will one day be forgotten like a bad dream. Our perplexities, distressing as they may be, will one day be swept away. If someone asks you about your list, you will say, "What about it? I don't care about it anymore. Because Jesus is the Answer."

1 Corinthians 13:12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

You see, our hope has its foundation on none other than Jesus Christ who is God Himself.

A little over a month before he died, the famous French atheist and Marxist Jean-Paul Sartre declared that he so strongly resisted feelings of despair that he would say to himself, "I know I shall die in hope." Then in profound sadness, he would add, "But hope needs a foundation." In other words, he had his hope in vain.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) Don't let your spiritual ears be given to satan.

He speaks lies that sound so right and so true while they are nothing more than sugar coated condemnation and shame.

2) Our hope for the future must be in Jesus Christ because all the other ground is sinking sand.

What a wonderful Savior we serve! How great You are, Lord!