

Sermon by Bob Brown on Sunday AM 2/15/09
"Focused Faith" - Job 3:1-26

As we read chapters one and two, Job seems to be like a saint in the eyes of God and everyone who knew him. His friends were shocked into grieving silence when they saw him sitting on that hill of ashes and dung. They could not even comprehend that this godly man, who was so kind, compassionate, prosperous and spiritual, could be in the position he was in.

As we read chapter three we see what appears to be a very different man. We need to keep in mind that Job is now living in indescribable grief (the loss of all ten of his children) he is in total financial ruin and excruciating pain. Any one of those things happening to us could very quickly change our way of thinking.

Even the most godly people, even those who have the highest moral standards and live by them (which is called character and integrity); even they have to deal with things in this world, and the evil one who keeps trashing them.

I don't know how long it took his friends to get to him, but we do know that they sat with him in silence for seven days and seven nights. I can only imagine that during that time the words of his wife: "Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!" (Job 1:9) must have been playing over and over in his mind. And I'm sure he would also play over and over again his response to her, "Shall we accept good from God and not trouble?"

Job's wife is not to be singled out as a woman or a wife, but she speaks what is usually in other people's thoughts, her words are indicative of a common attitude toward suffering. Maybe she was just speaking from her grief; maybe she was speaking from her grief and hurting for her husband, who was in terrible shape. Whatever the reason, what she says is what puts her in bad company. Job's answer to her seems to make her perfectly willing to accept and enjoy all the blessings of God, but then fail to see that because of this situation they are now in, this suffering just might be from Him as well. Job understands that it is God who gives both blessings and sufferings.

But now, after 168 hours of tormented thinking in silence, after mulling all of this over again and again in his mind, it becomes harder to accept. Job knows that God is good and that God is just, but what he is living makes it hard to wrap his brain around. He doesn't curse God, but he questions whether he should have ever been born. "Why did I not perish at birth, and die as I came from the womb?" (**Job 3:11**).

Job used to have it made in the peace and protection of God, but now he not only doesn't have peace, he has no rest and nothing to protect him. Where he used to have the hedge of protection from God, now he feels boxed in by that same God, but can't figure out why.

After all this time to think and grieve he might even be beginning to wonder, could it be that God would allow His chosen, His righteous children to suffer such calamities needlessly? And since he can't reconcile these thoughts, he begins to think it would have been better for everyone had he not been born, or that he had been stillborn, to avoid all of this pain and suffering. Since none of it makes sense, it must all be his fault, so he curses the day he was born.

We can almost relate to his wanting to have the day of his birth cursed, wanting to die, and questioning God, but still know that it is wrong to think this way, and Job was at least able to voice it earlier: "Shall we accept good things from God, and not trouble?" (**Job 2:10**). As hard as this is to read, we know that there is something wrong with his lament.

Even as we look at all the men and women of the Bible, with all the trouble and grief that many caused themselves, with all the pain and suffering, the blatant sin of so many people of God, He still loves us. There is only one man in all of Scripture that it has ever been said "It would have been better for him if he had not been born" (**Matthew 26:24**).

For any of God's creation to wish they had never been born, or stillborn, is a lapse of faith in the One who knows us best, even when we are being tested and proven.

We all need to understand that grief, and this is some serious grief, pain, suffering, ruin, and loneliness can cause any one of us to have a lapse of faith and even belief that God is listening or even that He cares for us.

Let me point out that for Job, even though this is a very serious lapse of faith, it is only temporary.

We know how this book ends, but we also know that somewhere in the middle of it Job says, in all of his pain, and now hurt from his friends, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God." (Job 19:25, 26).

Job, feeling like God has abandoned him, wants to die, probably a natural desire for someone in his predicament. But I find it rather amazing what he says at the end of this passage: "What I feared has come upon me, what I dreaded has happened to me." (Job 3:25).

This could very well go back to what was said about Job at the beginning of this book: "Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, [his children] thinking, perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts. This was Job's regular custom." (Job 1:5).

There could very well have been Job's lack of trust or even confidence in his heart that God wanted to help him work through. It is a very tough lesson to learn, to trust God completely. It is even harder when we outwardly say that we have complete trust and confidence in God, and then lack faith and wilt when we are tested.

Job had some problems, we all do, but we can use what God showed Job to learn how to be more Christ-like in our own lives. We, like Job will have a lot of people who will tell us what we have done wrong, are doing wrong, and will probably be doing wrong in the future, based on their analysis, but our mission is to stay close to Jesus. Our only hope is to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and our only desire should be to please God.