

May the Name of the Lord Be Praised
Job 1-2, 42
Key Verse: 1:21

by Dr. Alan Wolff

"and said: 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised.'"

Happy Thanksgiving! We thank and praise God that he has been with us and has done mighty work among us. There are many things to be thankful for. In fact, Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, ""Be joyful always, pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." According to the Bible, we should be thankful in all circumstances. However, the problem is that it is hard to always be thankful, especially when we suffer. But God has provided a lot of help for us to be thankful in all circumstances. One of them is by putting the book of Job in the Bible, which has become known as one of the most profound books ever written that addresses the problem of human suffering. Oftentimes when people face suffering, they ask "why me?" and think that God might be punishing them for something they did. But we learn today from the God of Job that he is not at all like that. Through this passage, may God dispel all complaints from our hearts and plant a spirit of deep thanksgiving to him in all circumstances.

I. May the name of the Lord be praised (1:1-21)

Look at verses 1-5. This prologue gives us background information about Job. He was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. He was wealthy, had a large family and verse 3 describes him as "the greatest man among all the people of the East." While Job had attained status in the world, he did not love the things of the world more than God. He kept his relationship with God as of first priority and was very concerned about the spiritual life of his children, sacrificing burnt offerings for each of them regularly and praying for them. Job seems to be the perfect person and blessed in every way. But in the verses that follow, he is attacked and loses everything. Let's see how all of this can possibly be God's great love for him and how the sufferings in our lives can also be God's great love for us.

While Job was innocently going about his life, there was something going on behind the scenes. Look at verses 6-12. The Lord called together a staff meeting among his angels in the heavenly realms. At that time, Satan, the fallen angel, also slithered in. When the Lord saw that Satan snuck in, he asked, "Where did you come from?" Satan responded, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it." The name Satan comes from the Hebrew "to wander" and alternatively "to accuse." 1 Peter 5:9b says, "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." He is prowling around to accuse, plant fear and tempt to sin. He is a very formidable adversary, but is a created being that is ultimately subject to the Lord.

When the Lord saw Satan, he boasted about Job. Verse 8 says, "Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil." God loved Job very much. Job was like the spiritual valedictorian among all people. But Satan, was skeptical. He charged that it was easy for Job to be blameless and upright because God had given him so many good things. He also accused God that he had bribed Job into obedience. These allegations were absolutely false, but God in his mysterious sovereignty allows free will and for things to be played out in the world. God respects and empowers human beings to make choices in life and sometimes allows Satan to test us. It is somewhat frightening, but this enables us to put our personal stamp on our lives and to make conscious decisions to love God, if that is what we decide to do.

What happened to Job next? Look at verses 13-19. A series of tragic events suddenly happened. Essentially Job lost everything that might have made him to be considered the "greatest man of the East." All at once, Job's successful business was destroyed and he lost all of his possessions. Many of his employees, colleagues and friends were lost also. It was a catastrophic blow. Then in verses 18-19 he got the last in the series of dreadful news. In a sudden accident, all of his children died at the house of one his sons. Losing one's job and the associated financial problems are difficult to bear. As bad as that is, it pales in comparison to losing a loved one, especially a child. And Job did

not just lose one of his children, he lost all of them. What a terrible disaster to happen to a man who feared God and shunned evil!

How did Job cope with this overwhelming tragedy? Look at verse 20. After hearing the news, Job came to God with his grief, falling to the ground in worship. The meaning of the word "worship" is "to adore." Job expressed his continuing love relationship with God by worshipping him at this moment. He did not understand why these things happened, but had a trust in God's sovereignty and unconditional love. According to the Bible, the fundamental way Satan attacks people is by planting doubt in the love of God. In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve were eventually enticed to sin by the serpent's implications that God was keeping something good from them and did not really love them absolutely. But God does love us absolutely at all times. The apostle Paul was a great servant of God but he faced constant trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, and danger in his life. Still he confessed in Romans 8:37-38, "...in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Missionary Daniel Shim has been a faithful servant of God, but he was diagnosed with a serious immune system problem that resulted in loss of work and financial difficulty. Even so, he never complained about it, accepted God's sovereignty and he never doubted the love of God. Instead he continued to read the Bible and pray even more knowing the love of God better in the midst of his difficulty.

What did Job say while worshipping God? Let's read verse 21, "and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised." Job had no sense of entitlement before God. He knew that he came into the world naked and that he would leave the world naked. Life in itself was a blessing and anything else beyond that was an even greater blessing. He knew that his business, his possessions, his friends and even his children did not belong to him but they belonged to God, were God's blessing to him and he was a steward of those blessings. Since everything belongs to the Lord, he felt that the Lord also had the right to take whatever he gave too. So Job said, "may the name of the Lord be praised."

We can be abundantly thankful when we realize that God made us to be stewards of life and the things he gave us. God gave us so many good things but they are on loan from God to use for his purpose until he wants them back. Our lives here are summarized well by Jesus in the parable of the talents with the words "put this money to work until I come back." (Lk 19:13b) The mistake though of many people is that they forget that they are stewards and try to usurp ownership of what God gave them. They love the God's blessings more than God himself who is the source of blessing. This leads to unnecessary struggle, greed and unthankfulness. But let's be thankful to God for what He gave us and who is he while living as his stewards in the world.

One person lost his dad at a very young age. Initially he asked, "Why did this happen?" but then came to God with his problem and trusted God's love. He accepted that God gave him a wonderful father from whom he received a lot of love and learned a lot of things from and then God took him on his own time. Since then he became a fruitful steward of things God gave him; God has blessed and he has been a blessing.

II. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble? (2:1-13)

Even though Job suffered much, he praised the name of the Lord. Satan was proved wrong and God was glorified. However, Satan was upset and snuck into another staff meeting between God and his angels. Look at 2:1-6. Satan challenged God that if in addition to the troubles he had, Job lost his health he would surely curse God. Again, God allowed this to happen with the stipulation that Job's life be spared. So Job became afflicted with painful sores over his whole body. In the subsequent chapters, Job indicated that they caused intense pain all over, fever, and he couldn't eat, couldn't sleep, he was itching, weeping, became depressed and even wanted to die. Job did what he could do about it, but as he scratched the uncontrollable itch and pain, it became even worse. Job's wife must have tried to comfort him and when Job couldn't sleep she also could not sleep because of his groaning. She saw Job's pain and thought it might be better for him to get it over with. She said to him, "Curse God and die!" Mrs. Job was bearing a lot of burdens herself, because of financial problems, losing her children, and her husband's serious health problem. So she could not help it. As a result, not only was Job mourning for the disasters that had befallen him and not only was he in great pain physically, but now he was alone in the midst of the suffering. Satan was trying to attack his marriage. The marriage relationship is the closest relationship on earth, so Job could have felt betrayed and could have fallen into complete despair. But what did Job say?

Look at verse 10. He replied, "You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble? In all this, Job did not sin in what he said." Job gently rebuked his wife. He had his own personal faith in spite of his Mrs. Job's sharp words. Again Job showed his strong trust in God's sovereign control that just as we accept good from him so we should accept trouble. Accepting trouble from the Lord is not so easy but those who do show that they have genuine faith. James 1:3-4 says, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." While we may be suffering outwardly, when we persevere we can find great comfort that God is molding us more into the person he wants us to be.

When Job's friends had heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they visited Job to sympathize with him and comfort him. They were Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. Look at verses 12-13. These men must have been good friends. They took off work and left their homes to stay with Job for one week. When they saw him, they wept aloud and sat with him to participate in his sufferings. Most of all, they did not say a word. They were caring men who quietly prayed for their friend. But later they made one big mistake: they opened their mouths to speak.

Chapters 3-31 of Job are a conversation between Job and the 3 friends, written as Hebrew poetry. Job cried out about his suffering while his 3 friends all counseled him with the best of intentions. The friends all had a cause and effect perspective on sufferings. They thought that fundamentally his suffering was because of some secret sin that he committed and that God was punishing him for it. Although their speeches seemed very correct theologically to them, their words must have hurt Job even more deeply because they did not really understand him. So Job cried out about his friends saying that they were "worthless physicians." (13:4-5)

Although Job had little human comfort, he found comfort in God. Amazingly he expressed faith in a Savior and in the resurrection. Right in the middle of the book, in Job 19:25-26 he says, "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." Although Job suffered, he was not without hope because he knew that he had a personal Redeemer. Here by Redeemer Job means one who would defend his cause and bring vindication to him. Job found that there was no one who understood him, not his friends and not even Ms. Job. But he believed that there was a living redeemer who would win the victory in the end. He did not realize it completely at the time, but his words are a prophecy of the Risen Savior, Jesus Christ. We cannot see God because of our sins, but our Redeemer Jesus Christ lives and mediates between God and man. Job suffered much, but his suffering was nothing in comparison to the suffering Jesus went through on the cross for the sins of all mankind. As good as Job was, he also needed a redeemer and Jesus retroactively paid the price for his sin as well as ours through his intense suffering, death and resurrection. Praise God that in spite of our difficulties and sins, we have a Redeemer in Jesus who will give us each complete victory in the end.

III. But now my eyes have seen you (Chapters 38-42)

After Job and his three friends argued for 29 chapters, a young man named Elihu counseled Job in chapters 32-37. Then in chapter 38, the Lord himself interrupted everyone and answered Job out of a storm. He rebuked Job saying, "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? ...Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand..." The Lord described his greatness to Job based on his being Creator God and His infiniteness compared to the limitations of man in time, knowledge, and ability. God is so awesome that human beings cannot fully fathom his greatness. God works in mysterious ways for his own purposes that are not immediately obvious. When the apostle Paul meditated on God's ways he said "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!" (Rom 11:33)

What was Job's reaction when God rebuked him? Turn to Chapter 42. Look at verses 1-6. In the previous chapters while Job maintained his faith in the Lord, he did have some complaints. But in verse 3, Job confessed, "Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know." After hearing God speak, Job came back to a humble state of contentment, accepting that there were some things he just could not know or understand about God and his ways of working. He also made another confession. Look at verses 5-6. "My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes." Here Job says that before he had only heard about God, but now through this suffering he had actually met God face to face. Seeing and meeting the awesomeness of the Lord caused him repent in dust and ashes. Perhaps Job repented his pride, self-righteousness, complaints, despair and self-centeredness. He into came to a deeper love relationship with God and began to experience the greatest blessing anyone can experience, that of meeting God personally. Among all of the blessings Job ever had in his life, this blessing is greater than all of them. Through all of his suffering, he put his

hope in God and then actually met the Lord face to face. This is possibly one hidden blessing in the trials we face. God often uses trials to bring us to know him personally.

According to the Bible, trials come so that through them we can have the greatest blessing of life. There are 3 basic types of sufferings. The first suffering is because of one's own sins. In that situation we can humbly come to God, repent and accept the grace of forgiveness in Jesus Christ. The second kind suffering is because of other peoples' sins, like when we are persecuted. In that case, we should remember how Jesus suffered, praise God that we participate in the sufferings of Christ and sincerely pray for those who wronged us. The third kind of suffering comes from bad things that seem to be no one's fault such as when Jesus saw a man born blind and said, "Neither this man sinned but this happened that the work of God may be displayed in his life." (John 9:3) This is the kind of suffering that Job went through. Most of the sufferings in my life have been the first kind, because of my sins. I got kicked out of Northwestern because of bad grades, but that actually turned out to be the greatest blessing in my life because through that I could repent my sins and meet Jesus. Other people have met Jesus in their storm. Jacob was a man who had only sought human blessings, but when he faced a severe trial in his life, he struggled with the Lord all night and met him deeply, having his name changed to Israel, the patriarch of a spiritual nation. Mother Barry was a Chemistry major in college, but when she took Organic Chemistry, she faced a storm of life, met Jesus very personally and became a devoted missionary.

Look at the epilogue of Job in 42:7-16. After Job repented, the Lord rebuked Job's friends for not speaking what was right and he asked Job to pray for them. God helped Job love his friends again and planted respect for Job in his friends' hearts again, and the Lord accepted Job's prayer. The Lord then blessed the latter part of Job's life twice as much as the first. Job became twice as prosperous as was before and Job forgave Mrs. Job, and Job loved his wife very much for sticking with him. Mrs. Job became really great and they had 7 more sons and 3 daughters. Moreover, Job's daughters were the most women in all the land and they got an inheritance along with their brothers. Finally Job passed away, a blessed man full of years and then he went into the presence of the Lord for eternity. God worked for the good in Job's life and all of misery turned into blessing. What happened in Job's life reminds us of the Bible verse, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (Rom 8:28)

Based on the study of Job, let's be thankful to our sovereign God for everything we have- possessions, friends, family, privileges, and God's wonderful grace in Jesus who died for our sins. Let's also be thankful for our sufferings, past and present, because often through those the best blessings in life come to us. May we come to know our awesome and loving God more deeply and be thankful in all circumstances this Thanksgiving time. Amen.