

INTRODUCTION

Did you hear about the two workmen who sat down for their lunch break? The first guy opened his lunch box, took out a sandwich, unwrapped it and said, “I can’t believe it! Baloney again. I hate baloney. This is the fourth time this week I’ve had a baloney sandwich!” The second guy said, “Well, why don’t you say something to your wife?” The first guy said, “What good would that do? I make my own sandwiches.”

The truth is that some of the baloney in our lives is there because we put it there. When we make bad choices we have to suffer the bad consequences. But sometimes, we find ourselves struggling and suffering and as far as we know, we didn’t make the baloney sandwich ourselves.

Surveys have revealed Americans are more afraid now than they were ten years ago. People fear terrorist attacks, monster storms, escalating gas prices, or worse—no gas at any price. Jesus said that in the last days, “Men’s hearts would be failing them from fear.” (Luke 21:26)

I think one reason people are more afraid is because we *know* so much more about what’s happening in the world. In a world of 24-hour news and weather channels, we can turn on the TV at any time day and night and hear about hurricanes, bird flu, and suicide bombers. That’s the nature of the news—to report on the bad news. When it comes to bad news, maybe ignorance is bliss. The Church of the Lord Jesus should be a 24/7 good news station! I’ve got good news for you today: If you’re afraid, if you’re in pain, if you’re lonely, if you’re suffering—there is hope—and that hope is found in Jesus Christ.

In a teaching series last spring I explained that in the Bible, HOPE means Having Only Positive Expectations. We’re going to see that Job was a great example of a man who Had Only Positive Expectations in the midst of terrible pain. Job was a famous and wealthy man who lived almost 4,000 years ago. In the space of a few days, he lost everything, including his precious children. Today, it would be like Bill Gates and Microsoft going completely under in one day. To make matters worse, Satan inflicted a painful skin disease on Job. His body was covered with sores from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet.

Three of Job’s friends found him sitting in an ash heap scraping his inflamed skin with a piece of pottery. 90 percent of the book is devoted to the cycle of conversation Job had with these three friends. In these middle chapters we learn how Job was feeling toward God and about himself. It is like reading someone’s personal journal.

In today’s passage we can open Job’s journal and read two amazing statements Job made. Job was in a fight for his life and sanity. He was still grieving and suffering miserably. His friends were there, but they told him God was punishing Job for some terrible secret sin in his life. In spite of all that, Job said: “Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him; I will surely defend my ways to his face. Indeed, this will turn out for my deliverance, for no godless man would dare come before him!” (Job 13:15-16) Job meant he would not give up hope in God—even if God killed him. God wasn’t going to kill him; God was the one keeping Job alive. But Job considered what we often call the “worst-case-scenario,” and decided he was going to maintain hope whatever happened.

Job’s second amazing statement is, “Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He springs up like a flower and withers away; like a fleeting shadow, he does not endure.” (Job 14:1-2) That’s right, this body we live in is temporary, like a flower it crumbles and withers away. But Job understood there is more to life than just the body. In Job 14:14-17 he asked one of the most profound questions in human history: “If a man dies, will he live again?” Then he provided his answer for the question: “All the days of my hard service I will wait for my renewal to come. You will call and I will answer you; you will long for the creature your hands have made. Surely then you will count my steps but not keep track of my sin. My offenses will be sealed up in a bag; you will cover over my sin.”

Job used his tears as telescopes to look ahead to what God had in store for him. Even in his pain, Job confessed his belief in the goodness of God. He believed he would meet God and that God would forgive his sins. As we join Job on his journey in this lesson, notice three aspects of his life.

I. JOB’S TEMPTATION

Satan’s temptation was for Job to curse God. Even Job’s wife joined the chorus. She told Job to “curse God and die.” But Job resisted that temptation. He poured out his heart to God. We can learn two things about him.

1. Job questioned God, but never blamed Him

How many questions do you think Job asked in this book? I recently went through the entire book again counting how many times Job asked a question. Job spoke in 19 chapters and asked 114 questions. Job was constantly asking God what He was doing and why he was suffering. But Job never blamed God for his misfortunes. We read in Job 1:22, “In all this Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.” (Job 1:22) It’s okay for you to question God, but don’t expect an answer. When God finally starts answering Job in Chapter 38, God answers with a few questions of His own!

2. Job complained to God but never cursed Him

Job didn’t deny his feelings of pain and bitterness. He cried out to the Lord, but not once did Job curse God. In Job 2, his wife tells him to curse God and die. Job replied, “Shall we accept good from God and not trouble?” In all this, Job did not sin what he said. (Job 2:10)

When you are struggling with pain and suffering, be careful what you say and how you say it. It’s possible you can sin by the things you say about God or the things you say to God. Job resisted these temptations, and so can we!

II. JOB’S TESTIMONY

Job was in the fight of his life. He wasn’t fighting against the Lord; he was fighting against Satan’s relentless attack. If you are a servant of God you are in the same battle. Satan wants to

make your life miserable.

I have never been a huge fan of professional boxing, but it was almost impossible not to be interested in the epic boxing matches between Smokin’ Joe Frazier and Muhammad Ali in the 1970s. In their first fight in 1971, Frazier knocked Ali out for the victory. Then in their 1973 rematch, Ali won a 12-round decision. That set up what some boxing fans consider one of the greatest fights in history. Ali and Frazier met on October 1, 1975 in what was called the “thrilla in Manila.” Ali, who considered himself a poet, boasted it would be a “killa, a chillla, a thrilla when I get the gorilla in Manila.”

For twelve rounds, Frazier pounded Ali into submission. Ali had been knocked down, and Frazier was clearly ahead in points. Observers believed it was only a matter of time before Frazier knocked Ali out. But in the 13th round, the fight suddenly changed. Ali started to jab, jab, jab Frazier with his left hand. He hit Frazier with nine straight left jabs, and then followed with a right cross that knocked Frazier’s mouthpiece out. That was the turning point in the fight. From that point on, Frazier’s punches lost their power. Frazier stumbled through the 14th round, and then before the 15th, his trainer threw in the towel when Frazier was unable to answer the bell. Ali won the match with that single punch delivered in the 13th round.

To me that’s a lot like what happened to Job. For 12 chapters Satan pounded, pummeled, and pressed Job. Job had been knocked down numerous times. *Pow!* Job lost his fortune. *Bam!* Job lost his family. *Jab!* Job’s wife told him to give up. Another vicious right—Job’s friends accused him of great sin. It was sickening to hear punch after punch thrown at Job. After 12 rounds Job was badly bruised and bleeding. The spectators, the angels of heaven, must have surely hidden their faces as their beloved Job was being brutally beaten up by the thug, the bully, the evil prince of darkness.

But then, in the 13th chapter, out of nowhere, Job slips a sudden uppercut through Satan’s attack. Initially, it seemed a weak and fragile effort, almost unnoticed. But it landed squarely on Satan’s chin, and suddenly, the devil staggered backward. What was the punch? It was this testimony: “THOUGH HE SLAY ME, YET WILL I HOPE IN HIM!” After 12 rounds of viciously pounding Job, when Satan was hit with this verbal uppercut, he was stopped in his tracks. With a look of unbelief in his wicked eyes, he wobbled, and then fell—knocked out cold.

The angels in heaven erupted with cheers, as Job stood there with his gloves raised ready to repel any more blows from his fallen foe. Job was victorious! Hallelujah! Oh, Job wasn’t crowned as champ until chapter 42, but from this point on, Satan was beaten. The knockout punch was delivered in Job 13:5 when he said, “Though he slay me yet will I trust in Him!”

When you are suffering and trying to find hope, this testimony can make the difference between defeat and victory for you. These are ten words that can change your life, because they change your outlook on life. Ten one-syllable words, but they deliver the knockout punch to Satan: “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him.”

The devil’s chief tool to discourage God’s servants is fear: Fear of pain; fear of death; fear of the unknown. At the moment of intense pain, Job makes a confession that completely nullified

Satan’s strategy. Satan wanted to make Job so miserable Job would curse God. But when Job said, “even if God kills me, I’m STILL going to hope in Him,” it knocked the wind out of Satan. Have you come to a place where you can say the same thing? “Whatever happens—even if I die—I’m not giving up: My HOPE is in God!” Satan has no defense against that kind of testimony.

III. JOB’S TRUST

Job resisted the temptation to blame God or curse God. Then he asked a powerful question. Job is a book full of questions, and there are some questions that are hard to answer. I heard a funny story about a college professor who greeted his new students on the first day of class by asking them a difficult question. He said, “George Washington was the first president, Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone and Neil Armstrong was the first man on the moon. Based on this information, how old am I?” No student had an answer, so he dismissed the class. The next day he asked the same question, “George Washington was the first president, Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone, and Neil Armstrong was the first man on the moon. Now, based on this information, how old am I?”

The students just shook their heads and finally one student said, “You’re 44 years old.” The professor said, “That’s exactly correct. Now explain to the class how you arrived at that answer.” The student said, “Well, I’ve got a brother in an insane asylum who’s 22 and you’re TWICE as crazy as he is!” Some questions fall into the category of stupid questions (here’s your sign) that don’t deserve to be answered. But In Job 14:14, he posed a question every person on earth thinks about at one time or another.

1. Job’s fundamental question: If a man dies shall he live again?

Is there life after death? This question deserves our consideration because, if Jesus tarries, all of us are going to die. You’ve probably wondered yourself, “What will happen to me after I die?”

We’re like the little boy who was wondering about death so he wrote a letter to God and said, “Dear God, What is it like when a person dies? Nobody will tell me. I don’t want to DO it, I just want to know.” Your friend, Mike

Like Mike, we all want to know. Everybody has an opinion. Atheists claim death is the end of human existence and after death there is only nothingness. Buddhists claim a person may be reincarnated as another type of animal. It’s a fundamental question, because if there IS only one life to live, and this is it, then you should grab all the marbles for yourself. But if there is a life after death, you should find out what it’s like and what will happen. This is one of the few questions Job asked, and then gave the immediate answer.

2. Job’s faith answer: I will wait for my renewal!

In Job 14:14-15 he said, “All the days of my hard service I will wait for my renewal to come. You will call and I will answer you.” Job’s short answer was “Yes, there is life after death.” But some theologians aren’t as definitive in their answer to this question. I remember when I was in seminary we studied a book called *Systematic Theology* written by Dr. Paul Tillich. When he

was writing about the possibility of life after death he wrote: "Since Eternal Life is Life and not undifferentiated identity and since the Kingdom of God is the universal actualization of love, the element of individualization cannot be eliminated." (*Systematic Theology*, p. 414) What??? I've found most theologians write books only other theologians can understand.

A few months ago, I visited a grieving family who lost a teenager in an automobile accident. They were asking me about life after death and heaven. What do you think I said to them? "Since eternal life is not undifferentiated identity, the element of actualized individualization cannot be eliminated." No! I didn't say that. I simply told them what Jesus said. Compare His simple, profound words to those of a theologian. In John 11:25 Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies." If a man dies, shall he live again? If you know Jesus as your Lord and Savior the answer to that question is a loud and clear "Yes!"

We can talk a lot about the story of Job, but that was 4,000 years ago. Whenever you study the Bible you should always ask two questions: First, what was God doing and saying back when this scripture was written? In Job's case that was almost 4,000 years ago. But the next question you should always ask is this:

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO ME TODAY?

God IS speaking. Are you listening? Here are at least three truths God is saying to me, and I believe if you listen, He's saying the same things to you.

1. When I'm suffering, I must resist the temptation to turn away from God

Can you remember when you found yourself at the lowest point of your life? It might have been after a job loss, or the death of someone you loved. It might have been when your parents split up or when you went through a divorce. There may be some of you who are at that low point right now. If you are a child of God, you have to deal with the same temptation Job faced—to curse God and die.

Do you find yourself at a point where you want to shake your fist in God's face and say, "God, why are you allowing these terrible things to happen to me?" That's exactly how Job felt. But like all temptation, you can resist it. Things *will* get better. That's what hope is. Suffering is only temporary. When you think of Job's suffering, don't ever forget what happened later in his life. God restored all he had lost and more. You've got to believe that in the end things will get better for you, if not in this life, in the next life for sure.

I love the story of the little boy who went to the pet store to pick out a new puppy. He looked down into a box of about a dozen furry puppies all clambering over each other. There was one little puppy looking up at him wagging his tail furiously. The little boy said, "I want the one with the happy ending!" When you choose Jesus, you choose the life with the happy ending.

Your tears can become telescopes to allow you to look forward in hope to the time when God restores you. Here's God's promise found in I Peter 5:10, "And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you

and make you strong, firm and steadfast.”

2. In my darkest hour it’s important for me to confess my HOPE in God

It’s not enough to simply *have* hope, it’s important to *confess* your hope. That’s what Job did. Now I’m not one of those “name and claim it preachers,” but there is enormous power in the spoken word. If you think bad thoughts and confess bad possibilities, that’s generally what you’ll experience. But whenever you make a good confession based on faith, good things will happen.

I believe the turning point in Job’s suffering was when he confessed: Though he slay me, yet will I hope in Him. Maybe you just need to memorize that verse and repeat a few hundred times.

Jesus underscored the power of confession in Matthew 16. Jesus was asking the disciples who He was. They told Him, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah; and still others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.” But then Jesus said, “But what about you?” The only one to answer was Simon Peter. He said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” Jesus said, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah...I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” (Matthew 16:14-19) He wasn’t talking about building a church on Peter. He was going to build a church on the confession Peter made. Whenever you make a strong confession that Jesus is the Son of the Living God, Satan and all of his demons tremble. Every confession of faith and hope is like a battering ram that slams into the gates of hell. So, go ahead, make a confession of your hope—even if you don’t feel it, confess it anyway, and you’ll find your hope is strengthened.

You may ask, “How can I confess my hope when all I feel is pain?” One way is to believe God is using your suffering to make you stronger. Job didn’t fully understand about the agreement between God and Satan, but he knew he was being tested. Job also knew he was going to pass the test. He used his tears as telescopes to look beyond his pain and said, “But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold.” (Job 23:10)

The Bible says our God is like a refiner. During times of fiery trials all the impurities and dross in our lives are melted away. Mary Kimbrough captured this thought in a poem: “Though He slay me, I will trust Him,” Said the sainted Job of old; “Though He try me in the furnace, I shall then come forth as gold. “Though He slay me”—can I say it When I feel the searing fire, When my fondest dreams lie shattered—Gone my hope and fond desire? “Though He slay me, I will trust Him,” For He knows just how to mold, How to melt and shape my spirit—I shall then come forth as gold!

3. I’m can’t cope with the troubles in this life until I’m ready for the next life

Death is evitable, so we need to make preparations for it. Until you’re ready to die, you’re not really ready to live. I’ve read about a tombstone in England with these words inscribed on it:

*Remember man, as you walk by,
As you are now, so once was I
As I am now, you soon will be.*

Prepare yourself and follow me

Those are good words, but someone added a note to the tombstone that said:

*To follow you I'll not consent
Until I know which way you went*

Job believed he would see His Creator after he died. So, he wasn't afraid to think about or talk about it. He confessed he was looking forward to being renewed and seeing his Creator face to face. We need to remember we aren't in the land of the living going to the land of the dying; right now we're in the land of the dying, and we're going to the land of the living. If you have a personal relationship with your Creator, you don't have to fear death.

CONCLUSION

Job shows us it is possible to have hope even in the midst of pain. It is this HOPE for the future that provides us with the strength to carry on and not quit. It's not HOPE in HOPE that works—it's coming to a place where you say, "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in Him!" Have you come to grips with what's going to happen when you die?

Back in the days when doctors made house calls, there was a small town doctor who walked around his community calling on those who were sick. He always had his trusty dog walking by his side. His faithful dog always waited patiently outside the house waiting for his master to finish.

One day the doctor was visiting a man named Luke who was suffering from a terminal illness. He said, "Doc, I'm scared. What can you tell me about death? What's on the other side?" The doctor said, "Luke, I can't tell you much, but I can show you something that might help you." The doctor got up and opened the door and called his dog. The faithful pet bounded inside leaping gratefully all over his master. The doctor continued, "Luke, my dog has never been in here before. He had no idea what was on the other side of this door. All he knew was that his master was on the other side. I can't tell you much about what's on the other side of death, but I know you're a Christian, so I can assure you that your Master is waiting there. When he calls, just think of it as running into His arms." Luke smiled and said, "That's good enough for me."

It was good enough for Job to know that His Creator would "call and I will answer." (Job 14:16) And if you know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you can be assured that when He calls you home, you will simply have to answer His call.

OUTLINE

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1. Job questioned God, but never blamed Him
2. Job complained to God but never cursed Him

II. JOB'S TESTIMONY

Ten words that can change your life:
"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

III. JOB'S TRUST

1. Q: If a man dies shall he live again?
2. A: I will wait for my renewal!

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO ME TODAY?

1. When I'm suffering, I must resist the temptation to turn away from God
2. In my darkest hour it's important for me to confess my HOPE in God
3. I'm can't cope with the troubles in this life until I'm ready for the next life



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes