

JOB

LESSON 4

1.c). The Second Test – 2:1-10.

1.c.i. The Second Assembly. 2:1-7a.

- I. God uses the same language with minor variation to describe Job, and, in addition, recognizes his loyalty. Vv. 1-3. (Note that God does not place the blame for Job's losses on nature or evil men, nor yet on Satan, the instigator; from God's point of view it was he who had destroyed Job.)
 - A. Satan's experiment had been for nothing; the only result was that his slander against God and Job had been disproved.
 - B. But does Job's retention of his integrity really conclude the matter in manner that proves the issue?
 1. It could certainly demonstrate that piety is not the result of prosperity.
 2. It does demonstrate that a righteous man can suffer and be true to his God.
 3. But could it not also demonstrate nothing more than that the trial had not been sufficiently severe.
 4. God invites Satan's agreement that the experiment has been a success, but Satan refuses to agree.
 - a) Satan is undeterred by round one.
 - b) He avers that he had just not asked for enough.
 - C. The real test has not yet begun – it is only when his own flesh is touched that the truth about Job will be made clear.
 1. Skin for Skin. This is a riddle; its meaning is not clear.
 - a) A barter – a fair trade.

- (1) Job judged the “skin” of his possessions and family to be a fair trade for his own.
 - (2) He was willing to give them up to save his own life.
- b) Arabic view of a double skin – give up the outer skin to save the inner person. The outer skin was only scratched by the losses. If his body is touched he will show his real character and yet will he curse God.
 - c) Person will sacrifice one part of the body to save another part. ILLUS: A woman injured in the Boston bombing chose to amputate one of her feet because she judged that a prosthesis would serve her better than her injured foot. (NEWS, 04/25/13)
 - d) It does not refer to the past but to the future – how Job will treat God if Job himself is touched.
2. Once more Satan is given permission to do with Job as he pleases, short of taking his life (which would not give Job an opportunity to prove his faithfulness). V. 6.
 3. Satan went forth to work his evil.

II. **Job’s illness. Vv. 7b-8.**

- A. There is no break here as in 1:12 and 1:13; Satan immediately got to his work.
- B. Job is stricken with disease over his entire body.
 1. Commentators have speculated widely on the nature of Job’s disease.
 2. The brief description speaks of boils (skin for skin). 30:17 may be nothing more than a figurative description of deep pain.
 - a) Some kind of skin disease covering the body and developing infections with darkened (30:28) and

peeling (30:30) skin with erupting pustules (7:5b) would meet the description in 2:7.

- b) Accompanying complications seem to include emaciation (19:20), fever (30:30b), depression (7:16; 30:15f), weeping (16:16a), sleeplessness (7:4), nightmares (7:14).
- c) To make matters worse, he had bad breath (19:17; *cf.* 17:1), bad eyesight (16:16b), rotting teeth (19:20), and a gaunt, hollow-eyed look (2:12).

C. He made his seat among the ashes.

- 1. Common reference is to dump outside the city.
- 2. Could indicate that he was an outcast at this time, placed in quarantine, but in that case his friends might not have access to him.
- 3. More than likely his own reaction to his new status as a piece of human trash.
- 4. He passed his time scratching his itch with a piece of broken pottery.

III. Job's second reaction. 2:9-10.

A. This time the pattern changes – Job's wife enters on the scene.

- 1. When a husband and wife stand together they have a strength and comfort that can stand against almost any, if not any foe.
- 2. Now the Devil strikes at Job through the one who should have been his staunchest supporter and greatest earthly source of strength.
 - a) Most spouses will support one another through a certain level of ill fortune, but when they reach a certain point, “for better or for worse” is forgotten.

- b) Closer and closer the trial came to Job's heart until now the dearest on earth deserts him.
 - c) Truly the devil has a pattern; he now seems to have an ally.
3. The scripture gives no background on Job's wife, so commentators have had to guess at what kind of person she was.
4. The speculation is ancient; some traditions have given her a longer speech. Christians are generally harder on her than Jews and Muslims.
- B. She was Satan's ally.
- 1. She urged Job to do exactly what Satan had said Job would do if God permitted Satan to touch him.
 - 2. Satan's temptation did not reach Job directly; it came through his wife.
 - a) She used the same words as God to pay tribute to Job's faith.
 - b) Her question could be, "Do you still insist on maintaining your integrity? What good has it done you?"
 - (1) If this is correct, she has already lost her faith and asks Job to join her.
 - (2) At best, her statement can be understood as a desire to see Job out of his misery, and the sooner the better.
 - (3) She does not see the possibility of restoration of family and wealth (the friends do and recommend repentance as the way to reverse Job's fortunes).

- (4) She sees death as the only remaining good for Job; he should pray to God to be allowed to die, or curse God in order to die.

- C. Whatever her motive, Job rejects the suggestion with a rage.
1. He does not call her *wicked*, but *foolish*, or lacking in discernment.
 2. She thinks God has treated Job badly and deserves a curse; Job finds nothing wrong in God.
 3. Here Job's trials enter a new phase; instead of helping, his wife and friends cause him more pain and put him under more pressure than all the other things that have happened to him.
 4. In first trial, God gives and takes away; here, it is equally right for God to send both good and evil.
 - a) *Receive* is an active word, implying cooperation, not simple submission.
 - b) Job blames neither himself nor God.
 - (1) He refuses to get bogged down in trying to understand all of the reasons for his problems.
 - (2) God understands; he does not.
 - (3) To *receive* or *accept trouble from God* implies the acceptance of a certain illogical dimension to life so beyond human understanding that faith cannot really comprehend it.
 - c) Such positive faith is the alchemy that changes the lead of suffering to the gold of peace; sorrow to joy; sour to sweet.
 - d) The cost is high; it is easier to lower your view of God than to raise your faith to such a height.

- D. Job did not sin.
1. Satan loses again.
 2. *With his lips* is no limitation suggesting that Job felt differently on the inside.
 3. If he felt one way on the inside and spoke differently, he did sin with his lips. If Job's words were not honest and from the heart, Satan had already corrupted him.
 4. Further, it is as wrong to curse God in the mind as it is with the lips.
 5. Nor can we concede that later Job weakened and fell into sinful speech.
 - a) However shocking some of his statements in his dialogs may seem to us, the only censure they receive from God is that Job obscured the divine purpose by talking in ignorance (38:2).
- E. In some ways Job's words in 2:10 are the last expression of clear mind and unshaken faith that will pass his lips before he sinks beneath the waves.
1. There will be times when he will seem to have come unhinged.
 2. But remember the opening where we have seen him as he truly is.
- IV. The arrival of Job's friends. 2:11-13.
- A. The previous basis of friendship is not explained.
1. While his friends came from three different countries, there is nothing to justify the conclusion of some that they were kings.
 2. The fact that they made an appointment shows that they were already friends and that they thought it would be better to come together.

3. What a blessing it is to have friends like this – who will drop everything in time of need, travel a distance, and stay by Job’s side for seven days.
 4. They were courageous. Job was having trouble after trouble. Not many like to hold on to a lightning rod in an electrical storm!
- B. There is no reason to doubt that they were genuine friends and that their motives were sincere.
1. Their behavior shows sympathy for Job’s plight.
 2. Although tactless and undiscerning at times, there is no reason to suppose that their words had any other motive.
- C. They did not recognize him;
1. They could see how differently he looked from the last time they saw him.
 2. Their gestures of sympathy are no less real because they are conventional.
- D. *Seven days* was the common period of mourning for the dead.
1. Ezekiel sat down seven days when he met the exiles (Ezek. 3:15).
 2. The friends’ reason was similar; they saw that Job’s suffering was very great.
 3. Attention was focused not on some philosophical question of undeserved suffering, but on one man’s physical existence in bodily pain.
 - a) There was nothing to be said.
 - b) They were horrified and speechless.
 - c) They were true friends, bringing to Job’s ash-heap the compassion of a silent presence.

- d) The real problem with this mission of mercy was that no mercy was forthcoming; as evidenced by their speech, even when they sat in silence with him they were condemning him in their minds.

Chapter 3

2. Discussion between Job and his friends. 3:1 – 27:23

The Overall Nature of the Discussion

1. Some call it “discussion,” some “debate,” some “conversation.” The speeches are too long for conversation, not really the argument of debate. It is not a philosophical symposium or a theological dissertation. “Job’s dunghill is not an improvised wisdom school.”
2. An audience is implied. The speakers are not attempting to convince one another, even when they address each other. That makes it difficult to find the connection between one speech and the next. There is often not a directly reply in one speech to the preceding one.
3. There is no use of formal logic to test the validity of the assertions made. The speeches are often emotional and sometimes resort to personalities.
4. Job’s speeches differ from those of his friends – they talk to Job about God; Job talks about God and sometimes to them. But Job is trying to understand his experience; hence he often talks to himself, struggling in his own mind.
5. He is trying to retain or, if lost, to recover his lost friendship with God; hence he appeals to God time and again. His prayers may shock at times, but at least he keeps talking to God.
6. Some find Job’s outbursts in the dialog completely opposite to his tranquility in the prolog, but they overlook the fact that nowhere in the book does Job bewail his losses in Chapter One and his illness in Chapter Two. He is not concerned with his wealth or health; from beginning to end his concern is God and his life with God. It is because he seems to have lost God that he is in such torment. It is not that he has been rendered indifferent to poverty, callous in bereavement, and heedless in pain. In such a case Job would not only lose his God but his humanity. It is that his overriding concern is his relationship with God.

2.a. Job’s Lamentation. 3:1-26.

- I. In the first speech the spectacle of human misery is presented with an overwhelming pathos.

- A.** Job is stunned because he cannot deny that it is the Lord who has done this to him.
 - B.** More pitiful than his “why” is his desperate need to find God, his Friend.
 - C.** Only God in the end can heal Job’s innermost mind.
 - 1.** It is not that God gives direct answers to Job’s questions.
 - 2.** It is that after God has spoken, Job leaves his questions behind.
- II.** It is Job who breaks the long silence. V. 1.
- A.** He has had time to meditate morbidly over his fate; he is crushed by unbearable weight.
 - 1.** His grief is intensified because life had promised, even given so much.
 - 2.** His present state threatens to cancel his faith in the goodness of God in making him a man.
 - 3.** Job, this unique servant of God (Job does not know this), industrious, devout, noble, the paragon of the world, now sitting in ashes, his past lost, his present pain, and his future empty.
 - B.** Job opened his mouth and cursed; he did not curse God, but the day of his birth.
 - 1.** How wretched human life can be.
 - 2.** So wretched that it would be better to end life quickly, and best never to have existed at all.
 - 3.** So Job curses his birth (3-10); longs for death (11-19); deploras life (20-23); and ends with a moan (24-26).
 - 4.** These speeches do not mean that Job has lost control.

- a) Job does not appear as a man gone haywire, but who knows exactly what he is saying and means every word of it.
 - (1) True, at the end of the day he will recant his words and repent in sackcloth and ashes (42:1-6), but this perspective is gained under entirely different circumstances and after a direct encounter with God.
 - (2) One of the grimmest aspects of Job's experience is that he did not teeter over the brink, but faced it all with his eyes wide open and his mind intact.
- b) Self-control is quite different from not showing one's emotions.
- c) Job is not a Stoic or a dehumanized robot.
- d) God nowhere prescribes a torpid resignation nor does He condemn those who cannot walk through the furnace with undisturbed tranquillity.
- e) Job is a man; his skin is festering and his nerves are on fire; the Lord's testing is not to see if Job can sit still like stone.
 - (1) One of the amazing aspects of Job's faith is that he did not reach a point where he just threw in the towel.
 - (2) While he did not abandon his faith, he just got sick and tired of trying to put a good face on things when the things he was facing didn't seem to have any good about them at all.
 - (3) This is honesty; not sin.
- f) Job 3 may be the bleakest chapter in Scripture, more so than Psalm 88, which after 18 verses, ends

with the statement, “Darkness is my closest friend.”

- (1)** Good to be reminded that such a dark outpouring is not unscriptural, that prayer need not be always upbeat and optimistic.
- (2)** The believer does not always arise from his knees full of encouragement and fresh hope.
- (3)** There are times when one may remain down in the dumps and still have prayed well.
- (4)** God wants us to be real with him; he wants our heart.