

When Bad Things Happen
Job 1:1; 2:1-10
HUMC 17 October 2021

On September 2, 1945, the documents of surrender that officially ended WW II were signed by the Japanese and all the designated representatives of all the allied nations. General Douglas MacArthur who officiated at the ceremony aboard the USS Missouri was the last one to sign on behalf of the United States.

MacArthur however, had his military colleagues sign for him. MacArthur took his fountain pen and simply signed his first name "Douglas". Then he passed the pen to General Wainwright who signed "Mac". MacArthur then handed the pen to General Percival who signed "Arthur".

This unusual procedure was Mac Arthur's way of honoring the two United States generals who had suffered as prisoners of war. Though they had suffered and persevered, they were now allowed to share in the glory of victory.

Those who share in the sufferings of Christ in this world will also share in his glory either in this world or in the world to come.

What I would like to speak about this morning is how we respond to suffering in light of eternity.

My text is Job 1:1; 2:1-10.

1 In the land of Uz, there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil.

2. On another day the angels^[a] came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them to present himself before him. ² And the LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it."³ 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. And he

still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason.”⁴ “Skin for skin!” Satan replied. “A man will give all he has for his own life. ⁵ But now stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face.”⁶ The LORD said to Satan, “Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life.”⁷ So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. ⁸ Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes.⁹ His wife said to him, “Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!”

¹⁰ He replied, “You are talking like a foolish^[b] woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble? ”In all this, Job did not sin in what he said. May God grant you understanding of his words.

Thanks be to God.

Job was a moral and wealthy man. He was married and was the father of seven sons and three daughters. He owned an incredible amount of cattle (7000 sheep, 3000 camels, 500 oxen, 500 donkeys) and had many people working for him.

And as the story unfolded in chapter 1, it seemed like a bad movie. Mercenary soldiers took most of his cattle and the rest were destroyed by some type of natural disaster. To add insult to injury, his children lost their lives in a cyclone. And if that were not enough. Job finally lost his health.

So in a very short period of time.

- Job lost all of his material goods.
- All his children
- His health plummeted in a downward spiral direction.
- He lost the moral support of his wife and his friends.

If anyone ever hit rock bottom, it was Job.

Now some have speculated that Job could have had a disease called elephantiasis or black leprosy in combination with a severe

bacterial fungal infection. If that was what he had, his skin must have felt like it was on fire 24/7. Because he constantly scratched, the skin had become open and infected with sores. If that weren't enough his arms and legs swelled double their size. This medical chain reaction caused his body to emit a putrid smell along with bad breath. And his skin turned hard like the hide of an elephants hide.

That was just the physical. Emotionally he suffered from anxiety in the day and nightmares in the evening which made life so awful. You have heard the saying, "When it rains, it pours." In other words, misfortunes tend to follow each other in rapid succession or they arrive at the same time.

The worst skin condition I ever had was when I made my last jump in airborne school and I landed in a fire ant patch and I was bitten all over and my body felt like it was on fire. But that was nothing compared to what poor Job had to endure. I don't there is anyone in this room that had gone through the suffering that this man had to endure.

Let me give you a snapshot of this situation.

- Job who was righteous and devout towards God was now alone.
- Job who once was rich was instantly poor.
- Job who served a powerful elder in the town and a helper of the needy was ridiculed and made fun of.

Look at it this way. In a very short time, his world had crashed. Everything was wiped out and his health was gone in a very bad way.

According to religious surveys, the number one question people would like to ask God is why he allows pain and suffering.

Actually it is the number one reason why people become atheists or agnostics.

For Job, he had no clue of why all this had happened to him. He lived right. He was truthful and honest. He functioned as a priest for his family. He served people in his community. He was an advocate for the poor as he assisted the widows and orphans.

Now he was dumbfounded about what had just transpired. Yet he continued to place his trust in God. He said in chapter 1, verse 21: ***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.***" I wish all of us could have that faith in the midst of tragedy.

Even though Job's grief was as real as it could get, he still looked to God for comfort. I believe he is a reminder that when we hurt, we are not to run from it. But to accept it and bring God into our immediate pain. Instead of staying home from church, trying to figure it out, we should continue to be in the faith, even though we don't understand.

For Christians there will be times when we will go through difficult times. And when they come, it is important that we do not get wiped out emotionally, but draw strength from the Lord and from each other.

In 1986 two brothers who were fishermen on the Sea of Galilee made an incredible discovery. They noticed an object protruding out of the mud on the shore line.

Archeologists were called in and they determined it was a fishing boat dating from the time of Jesus. The reason it was discovered after thousands of years was discovered was because of a three year drought, which exposed more of the shore line than usual.

There is a spiritual lesson in all of this. In times of dryness and despair, God may uncover something of fabulous value within his presence. So when we go through periods of spiritual drought, there is a purpose and God does have a plan. And what we need to hang in there and not give up.

Even though he lost his family, his livelihood and his health, in Chapters 2-38 he asked these questions. And these are the same questions that we ask.

Where are you God?
Why did this happen?
What does this mean?
What did I do to deserve this?
What did I do wrong? .

The Apostle Paul wrote in **Romans 5:3-4. And not only that, but we boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope.**

Sometimes in the midst of our suffering, we can use those difficult experiences to our advantage or benefit. Some of the world's greatest people were handicapped or had physical limitations.

When Handel wrote the "Hallelujah Chorus, his right side had been paralyzed and all of his money was gone. He was heavily in debt and was threatened with imprisonment, but that was when he composed his greatest work, the Messiah.

Helen Keller who was deaf and blind wrote, **"I thank God for my handicaps, for through them I have found myself, my work, and God."** Actually some of the most radiant Christians that I have known were the ones who triumphed in affliction.

Today, the Patriots will play the Dallas Cowboys. And if you watch the game, you will undoubtedly see the head coach Bill Belichick on the sidelines wearing a headset. Then during the game, television cameras will occasionally show an assistant coach high up in the stadium who is also wearing a headset. This assistant coach is looking down at the action and relaying information to Coach Belichick, things that he can't see while on the ground.

When it comes to suffering, sometimes we can't see the forest through the trees. But things would look a lot better when we can see the bigger picture. That is why it is important to trust in the Lord. God's view of suffering may differ from ours.

But in spite of the trials and difficulties, there is divine timing and growth. He has a plan even when we cannot see it or when it doesn't make any sense.

The story of Job reminds us that serving God does not exempt us from trouble. In the midst of it all:

Tragedies will come
Calamities will come.
Disasters will come
Setbacks will come
Pain will come
Death will come.

So what do we do? Consider the example of Job. He held on though he didn't quite understand what was happening. He didn't give up on his faith.

If we stay faithful and true, we will receive our recognition and reward from Christ just like General Douglas Mac Arthur recognized his 2 generals on the USS Missouri.

Suffering is part of being in imperfect bodies, in an imperfect world. Even Christ suffered immensely so that he could attain forgiveness of our sins but also so that he could identify with our suffering.

³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, [\[k\]](#) neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ 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.

It is incumbent on us to stay faithful and true to the Lord and he will pull us through. We may receive answers to prayer in this life, if not, we will receive total healing in the next.

The book of Job has a positive ending. Job was restored to health, had more children and received an abundance of material possessions.