

BABBLING ON ABOUT THINGS FAR BEYOND ME**Job**

Intro: This is the second to last message in my REBOOTING series which I began back in early January. Did anyone have a chance to read through Job this week? If you did, you did more than me. I read a lot of Job and I had poured over books on Job, and I watched that fantastic little overview from THE BIBLE PROJECT; but I didn't read the entire book. That's because my intention is to talk about how Job was rebooted than do an analysis of a long and complex and philosophical and theological book. An undertaking like that would take weeks and weeks, and though it would be a great study, it's not my intention today. My aim is to show that even Job, the perfect man needed to be rebooted.

Let's have a little introduction to him by reading Job 1: (I won't have it on the screen since it is pretty long) Listen closely, or better yet, follow along in your own Bible. (**Read Job 1**)

Job the perfect man

- You can see why Job is described as . . . *blameless and upright, who feared God and turned away from evil*. Job 1:1, who rose early in the morning (v. 5) to make sure that he and his were walking with God. He offered burnt offerings for his children, ensuring that their sins were covered.
- Now, mind you, we can't do that. We can't make sure that the sins of those we love are cared for because that is something they must do for themselves. You can't live your child's life. You can't turn them from sin. They themselves must do that. But Job did all he could to make sure that his family was walking with God, and that shows what kind of a good man he was.
- Job is so good that God actually brags about him to Satan. Don't get me wrong, I don't mean that God was boasting in a bad sense, but in a sense that God had confidence in his servant to walk in faithfulness. Satan takes that as a challenge.

Satan's test

- Can he afflict Job and prove that Job serves God because of what benefits he gets from that service? That's what he thinks. In his limited way of thinking, because Satan is indeed limited, he cannot believe that Job is so upright that he serves God and lives in righteousness because God is who God is and not because he is expecting any special kind outcome.
- Satan sets out to test Job to the breaking point.
 - It's like the testing laboratory in the factory where I worked when I was in college. I was the lone member of the shipping department in a plant that made aluminum and steel cable support systems. These ladders, as we called them (because they really looked like that) were designed to hold electrical cables in place along the ceilings of large buildings like factories or warehouses. That's all we did – hundreds of tons of them each day. My job was to strap the ladders into stacks 12 high and load them into trucks, many of them destined for oil refineries in Saudi Arabia
 - The place was noisy! There was a constant din as the machinery making the cable support systems clanged, hammered, and roared. But every once in a while, over that cacophony, there would come the sound of something louder. It was the crashing sound of steel or aluminum splitting apart and hitting the concrete floor. The noise was coming from the testing laboratory where a couple engineers would be testing the weight and stress limitations of our product. They would set a 12 foot ladder between two supports, then they would begin placing weight on that ladder to see how much weight it would take for it to break. At first the technician would be putting on fairly heavy weights, but as he progressed, the weights that he put on would be smaller and smaller, until he would put on a one or two ounce weight each time until, finally, the ladder would give way and crash to the floor. The engineer then knew, fairly accurately, how many cables the ladder could safely withstand.
- In so many ways, this was the kind of pressure Satan was placing on Job. He thought that Job would crash and fall if he applied just enough pressure. He did not realize that Job was really as good as God said he was.
- Even when Satan sends affliction (which God allows) Job refuses to blame God. Everything is taken from Job. Everything! I'm not going to read it, but the testing of Job continues in the beginning of chapter two

where Satan even takes Job's health. Then as if the scraping of his scabs from whatever skin disease he has was not bad enough, Job's wife says to him *"Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die."* Job 2:9. Even his wife couldn't take it anymore. That should have been the straw that broke the camel's back. But it wasn't. Job refuses to give up on God. Job 2:10 says, *In all this Job did not sin with his lips.* Job 2:10.

Enter Job's friends

- Job's four friends and his discussion with them take up the next 35 or so chapters.
- Three of these friends show up at the end of chapter 2 – they are Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. The friends do what is best in a grieving situation – they grieved with Job in silence and supported him with their presence – for seven days and seven nights. Often when we hope to support a person who is grieving we say too much and stay too little. A ministry of presence is best – and Job's friends did well. For a while . . .
- Until Job cursed the day he was born and launched into a wrenching lament. (Job 3). All the while he never blames God. His incredible faithfulness that God had brought to Satan's attention shines forth.
- But that faithfulness is lost on Job's friends. Well, maybe they didn't miss it, as much as they thought his severe situation was clouding his thinking. One after the other they challenge Job's claims of innocence. They are sure that Job has done something to bring such trial and loss. An example of this is when Eliphaz confronts Job with,

Remember: who that was innocent ever perished?

Or where were the upright cut off?

*As I have seen, those who plow iniquity
and sow trouble reap the same.*

By the breath of God they perish,

and by the blast of his anger they are consumed. Job 4:7-9

This was the theology of that age – and, all things considered, it still is. Many think that if you are good, God will treat you good, and if you're bad, God will treat you bad. It's a simplistic explanation, but it's accurate and it's very common. It even invades Christian thinking where, even though we should know better, we think when suffering and heartache come it is God's punishment for something. Let me just interject here, God doesn't work that way. Bad things happen to good people because we live in a fallen world. But, again, that's another sermon, and I don't think it would necessarily be based on the book of Job.

- Now, back to Job and his friends: The discussion continues, with one of the friends sharing his view of the situation followed by Job's response – one after the other. Each one shares a similar theme – *"Own up to it Job, there has to be something you did to deserve this."* And Job replying time after time, proclaiming his innocence. He hasn't done anything. He has been above reproach as God is his witness.
- I can imagine, to be within earshot the conversation became increasingly heated. The friends who had the best intentions in their words for Job were getting the idea they were not being heard. Job felt the same and his despair was growing. His friends were relentless and he was even feeling abandoned by the God to whom he was so faithful. Nevertheless, despite the discouraging words of his friends and abandonment of his relatives and his sense of betrayal from God he proclaims, *For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth.* Job 19:25.
- Finally in Chapter 31 Job makes his closing arguments, still proclaiming his innocence. He has been faithful to God and that's final!

Along comes Elihu

- Elihu the Buzite is the fourth friend. He is young and he's wise beyond his own years, especially in his own mind. He probably came late to the dialogue, but maybe he's been there the whole time and he's been listening in and he cannot stay silent any longer. The text says he *burned with anger* Job 32:2 – especially at Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. And he was mad at them, not because they were mean to poor old Job, but because, for as smart they were, they had not come up with a single solution to Job's situation. He is clearly disappointed with them.

- But they are not Elihu’s only targets – Job is in for a dressing down too. He reams Job for pushing back at the treatment he is obviously receiving from God for some offence. He finishes his rebuke of Job with,

*Pay attention, O Job, listen to me;
be silent, and I will speak.*

*If you have any words, answer me;
speak, for I desire to justify you.*

If not, listen to me;

be silent, and I will teach you wisdom.” Job 33:31-33

- God is a God of justice and Elihu will have no more accusations to the contrary. He makes some more fiery claims about Job. In essence he accuses Job with crying against God when he should be crying to him. He ends with, *Job opens his mouth in empty talk; he multiplies words without knowledge.* Job 35:16 That is rough language. This is followed by some beautiful and descriptive language that has the headings of ELIHU EXTOLS GOD’S GREATNESS and ELIHU PROCLAMATES GOD’S MAJESTY for chapters 36 and 37 in my ESV Bible. Elihu lays it on heavy and there isn’t anything he says that is contrary to the truth. Then . . .

God responds

- It is specifically a response to Job, beginning in chapter 38 – the rebooting begins. I wish I had time to read these next 3 chapters to you – they are magnificent. The gist of them is, “*Who are you to think you know me and all that I know and see?*” God uses creation as a backdrop and as an illustration of how he is aware of the smallest and most, seemingly insignificant thing. He asks,

Do you know when the mountain goats give birth?

Do you observe the calving of the does?

Can you number the months that they fulfill,

and do you know the time when they give birth,

when they crouch, bring forth their offspring,

and are delivered of their young?

Their young ones become strong; they grow up in the open;

they go out and do not return to them.

“Who has let the wild donkey go free?

Who has loosed the bonds of the swift donkey,

to whom I have given the arid plain for his home

and the salt land for his dwelling place? Job 39:1-6

This is the intimate knowledge that an infinitely loving Creator has of every single part of his creation. The song, based on numerous scripture verses says, “*His eye is on the sparrow, and I know he watches me.*” And it’s true!

- F. B. Meyer, in his picturesque language says this, “*A sublime series of questions is now addressed to him, not by a God of judgment and wrath, but by a Father arguing and pleading with his child and pointing out two things: first, the inability of mortal man to understand the ways of God; and second the minuteness and tenderness of God’s Providence. Job had thought of him as remote, but he is near and is ordering all things wisely and lovingly. Can he forget his child?*”
- It comes down to this, only God knows God. We can try, but in the end, we all get it wrong here and there. In the words of the Message quoting Job in the closing chapter, we all do our share of *babbling on about things far beyond us.*
- Job, you thought you were faithful, and you are. But you still have so far to go! And then came . . .

Job’s restoration

- After God’s retort to Job we read,

Then Job answered the Lord and said:

“I know that you can do all things,

and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’

*Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.
'Hear, and I will speak;
I will question you, and you make it known to me.'*
*I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,
but now my eye sees you;
therefore I despise myself,
and repent in dust and ashes.*” Job 42:1-6

- And while God’s response to Job was three chapters long, his rebuke of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar is much shorter and much harsher. He says – “*With friends like you, who needs enemies?*” Actually what he said was,

“My anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. Now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves. And my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly. For you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.” So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did what the Lord had told them, and the Lord accepted Job's prayer. Job 42:7-9

- And Job, the one who was blameless and upright in the beginning was even more blameless and upright. He prayed for his friends, he remained faithful to his God, and all his fortunes and family were restored. Job was rebooted. Amen.