

July 26, 2020
Sunday Morning Service
Series: Job
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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THE DEPTHS OF DISCOURAGEMENT

Job 3

In the classic movie *It's A Wonderful Life*, George Baily was at the end of his rope when his uncle Billy inadvertently lost an \$8,000 deposit. The Baily family's perennial enemy, Mr. Potter, found the money and tried to blackmail Baily Savings and Loan out of business. As the story goes, George was so discouraged that he stood on a bridge contemplating suicide. That is when George's guardian angel Clarence Obody came on the scene in a novel way of saving George from catastrophe. Sitting in the guard house of the bridge drying out after George rescued Clarence the angel from the water, George said, "I wish I had never been born."

Those are the words of a very discouraged person. Have you ever reached the point in life where you wonder what the point of life is at all? Have ever thought that it might be better if you were not alive at all? Job did.

Many of you have had the experience, responsibility, and maybe burden of caring for a loved one whose health is declining. On one hand, the caregiver might be very sensitive about the time and energy that is required, the sacrifices that must be made. But on the other hand, we need to stop to consider how the person with declining health feels. They realize they are dependent, maybe very dependent. They realize that the end is drawing near. But maybe they suffer in those last days wondering, "Lord, why do you allow me to keep living?" That is the depth of discouragement.

Job responded just like fictional George Baily and our real-life friends and loved ones who suffer when this life totally unravels. He had experienced the pinnacle of wealth and pleasure. Job possessed and experienced all the best that passing life could afford. He was the

wealthiest man in the East. He had a great family. And most important, he walked in amazingly intimate fellowship with God. What more could a man desire?

Then through an unknown and bizarre test, driven by Satan's accusation against God's integrity, Job went from the pinnacle of pleasure to the depths of discouragement. The third chapter of Job might be the most foreboding, dark, discouraging chapter in the Bible. It is a soliloquy. Job was not speaking to his friends yet. Nor was this a prayer to God. This was Job talking, unpacking the depths of his soul. No audience was necessary. But in it we get a glimpse of how deeply Job was sunk in the pit of despair.

In many of the psalms, David cried out for the depths of discouragement. But he always concluded those psalms with a note of hope and confidence in God's faithfulness. This chapter doesn't have any of that. All we find is the pouring forth of hopelessness. We must consider these words from Job as only a portion of the whole story. This is where we can end up when we do not understand what God is doing. This is where we land until we fix our eyes on the God of all hope. Job took too long to get to that point. We won't.

An Expression of Discouragement (Job 3).

Job was so distraught about his circumstances that he cursed the day of his birth (vv.1-10). But it is important to note that he cursed his birth, not his God. Satan had wagered that if God took away Job's possessions he would blaspheme God to His face. When that didn't work, Satan argued that physical suffering would cause Job to blaspheme God. That also did not prompt Job to curse God. Job's wife, used the same word (*curse*) to chide Job to blaspheme God which she must have assumed would result in God killing Job. Job refused to speak disparagingly of God (*curse*) but continued to maintain his faith in God.

Now, after sitting in ashes for a few days, Job finally spoke. *After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth (v.1).* Our text uses a different Hebrew word when it translates that Job cursed his birth. This Hebrew word means to speak lightly, to hold in low regard. This was not an outburst of angry, vulgar words as we

might typically think of cursing. The context bears out the idea of Job's very low view of the day of his birth.

And Job did not only curse the day he was born, but also the day he was conceived. *And Job said: "Let the day perish on which I was born, and the night that said, 'A man is conceived'"* (vv.2-3). In a somewhat passing way, this statement affirms a very important point. The Bible views a person to be a person at the moment of conception, even as Job acknowledged here.

Job said, *"Let that day be darkness! May God above not seek it, nor light shine upon it"* (v.4). It was a dark and stormy night. That is how story writers and movie makers still capitalize on the foreboding spirit of a dark, gloomy night. Throw in a few lightening flashes and you can expect something unfavorable to happen straight away. Worse is that the night when Job was conceived, in the context of intimate physical joy and pleasure between his mother and father, the whole event was terrifying.

And so he concluded, *"Let gloom and deep darkness claim it. Let clouds dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it"* (v.5). He wished conception of him would have never been. *"That night – let thick darkness seize it! Let it not rejoice among the days of the year; let it not come into the number of the months. Behold, let that night be barren; let no joyful cry enter it"* (vv.6-7).

In Job's opinion, it would have been better to stir up the sea monster Leviathan than for him to be conceived. *"Let those curse it who curse the day, who are ready to rouse up Leviathan"* (v.8). This passing statement gives us the idea that there was an actual creature known as Leviathan. That monster was not a figment of mythology. Near the end of the book, God Himself speaks in detail of this monster that no man could control (chapter 41). To rouse up Leviathan would be to invite disaster. In J. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, the hobbits who make up the Fellowship of the Ring, are passing through the mines of Moria, an ancient subterranean complex in Middle Earth. One of the hobbits accidentally awakened the monster Balrog bringing catastrophic chaos to themselves and especially to Gandolf their leader.

Job honestly felt (it appears) that it was better to have everlasting darkness, no joy in morning as the dark night ends. *"Let the stars of its dawn be dark; let it hope for light, but have none, nor*

see the eyelids of the morning, because it did not shut the doors of my mother's womb, nor hide trouble from my eyes" (vv.9-10).

A second argument from Job, while he was in his desperate depression, was that "if he had to be born, fine." But, immediate death would have been better (vv.11-19). He wondered why he had not died at birth. His musings illustrate the same experience, the same process every new born experiences. *"Why did I not die at birth, come out from the womb and expire? Why did the knees receive me? Or why the breasts, that I should nurse?"* (vv.11-12).

Job concluded that if he would have died at birth, he could have been at rest in death like all who have died before. *"For then I would have lain down and been quiet; I would have slept; then I would have been at rest, with kings and counselors of the earth who rebuilt ruins for themselves, or with princes who had gold, who filled their houses with silver"* (vv.13-15). Solomon came to a very similar conclusion. *The day of death [is better] than the day of birth (Ecclesiastes 7:1b)*. But is the grave a place of rest? Granted, because Job lived in such an ancient time, he would not have had much knowledge about life after death. Though it is true that he expected to rise from the dead (Job 19:25). These are the musings of a terribly discouraged man.

Along with the idea of dying at birth, Job grew even more graphic and wondered why he was not stillborn. *"Or why was I not as a hidden stillborn child, as infants who never see the light? There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest. There the prisoners are at ease together; they hear not the voice of the taskmaster. The small and the great are there, and the slave is free from his master"* (vv.16-19). Again, Solomon concluded after a frustrating life of finding no satisfaction in passing things: *If a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years, so that the days of his years are many, but his soul is not satisfied with life's good things, and he also has no burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he. For it comes in vanity and goes in darkness, and in darkness its name is covered"* (Ecclesiastes 6:3-4).

All of these questions fly in the face of God's sovereign design and control. There is no doubt that Job loved God, respected God, and honored God in his life. But at this moment of his despair, his vision of God was terribly blurred.

Third, Job questioned why people live their whole lives in suffering (vv.20-26)? Why does a person continue to live in misery? *“Why is light given to him who is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul, who long for death, but it comes not, and dig for it more than for hidden treasures, who rejoice exceedingly and are glad when they find the grave?”* (vv.20-22). This was a plaguing question for Job who was in the deepest of suffering. But it is also a hard question for all who suffer. The question about him who is in misery is singular in case. But the question about those who are bitter in soul is plural and can refer to anyone and everyone who is suffering.

In fact, Job’s reference here is not simply to suffering, but to the person who is laboring in suffering. He is talking about an ongoing kind of suffering. That ceaseless suffering results in becoming *bitter of soul*. That phrase describes a deep bitterness that settles in the very essence of our being, the heart. Remember that the heart governs our intellect, emotions, will. It is the well spring of our lives. If it is full of bitterness, we are in a very difficult situation.

It would have been much easier if Job lost everything, then had a short spat with a serious sickness, but it passed. Once the disaster has passed, we can begin to pick up the pieces. But how do you begin to put life back together when you suffer and are bitter to the depths of your personality – every day? Such a person longs for death but it escapes them.

To drive the despair even deeper, Job wondered why God secretly fences people within suffering. *“Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, whom God has hedged in?”*(v.23). Light is equivalent to life and understanding. It is not that the way is hidden from God whose all-seeing eye knows all things. Rather, the problem here is that the meaning and purpose of suffering and misery is hidden from the sufferer. Maybe he has confessed all known sin, he has asked God to reveal secret sins, he has repented and walks in fellowship with God (sounds like Job). But in spite of his sincere confession and repentance, there is still suffering because God has fenced in the miserable person’s way. He longs to run off the road through the forest to get away. But he cannot get over the fence God erects.

Which led Job to conclude that he had arrived at man’s greatest fear – suffering without death. *“For my sighing comes instead of my*

bread, and my groanings are poured out like water”(v.24). Sighing and groaning is more intense than those words indicate. Job spoke of his groans, and crying out or roaring. Try to picture this man who suffered so deeply crying out loudly, shrieking in physical and emotional pain.

Why? What drives a fellow human to such extremes? *“For the thing that I fear comes upon me, and what I dread befalls me”* (v.25). Maybe the possibility of Job fearing such things is why he was found in 1:5 making sacrifices, interceding for his children (v.25). He arrived at the conclusion, *“I am not at ease, nor am I quiet; I have no rest, but trouble comes”*(v.26). There are four words in this verse that describe Job’s daily condition: *no ease, no quietness, no rest, but only trouble* (v.26). What a pitiable situation.

Now looking back over the godly man’s terrible discouragement, we should be able to discern a stark contrast. When suffering began, Job was confident. When God allowed Satan to take all Job’s possessions and family, Job worshiped God. *Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped* (Job 1:20). When God allowed Satan to cause Job to suffer physically, he did not sin. He told his wife, *“Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?”* *In all this Job did not sin with his lips* (Job 2:10). Job’s response to such incredible chaos, loss, and suffering surely affirmed that he was every bit the righteous man God said he was.

But Job was a human as we are. He got caught in discouragement and that is always a downward cycle. It is easy in times of discouragement or despair to get into a downward cycle to destruction or a feeling of hopelessness. Those of you who have been there can testify that it is an awful feeling to be depressed. Depression is like a deep, dark dungeon that you feel like you cannot escape. You feel like God has abandoned you. You feel like there is nothing or no one who can help get you out of the pit. And then the cycle goes deeper when you feel GUILTY for feeling hopeless. Granted Job experienced suffering on a level few, if any, other people ever have experienced or ever will.

But there was hope for Job in his incredibly dire circumstances. And there is hope for us. As our story will eventually prove, there is hope because there is God. But our experiences of suffering are more

in line with those of David who penned Psalm 69. In that psalm we find much hope, incredible hope in the face of suffering.

An Expression of Hope (Psalm 69:29-34).

The truth is that even God's people can find themselves in very difficult circumstances. No one could testify to that better than Job. But David also experienced a painful situation. The first part of verse twenty-nine sounds like Job. *But I am afflicted and in pain; let your salvation, O God, set me on high! (v.29).*

Affliction could come from any number of sources. Pain is often physical. We can experience pain from people, pain from sin that we wrestle with sometimes futilely. What do we do? How do we respond? Acknowledge the pain and affliction and cry out to God for help. Salvation is not just a future hope. It is a present promise from God.

Like Job's situation, David's situation seemed hopeless. *Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me. I am weary with my crying out; my throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God (vv.1-3).*

For David, the source of trouble was not directly from God or Satan. His problem was people. *More in number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without cause; mighty are those who would destroy me, those who attack me with lies. What I did not steal must I now restore?(v.4).*

But notice that David did not let his trouble take him down into depression and despair. He determined, *I will praise the name of God with a song; I will magnify him with thanksgiving (v.30).* The word praise comes from the root that means to shine like the sun. Like the literal sun, our best response to trouble is to shine glory and right assessment on God. Acknowledge truth about Him. Our praise ought also to shine the glory and majesty of God into the dark world. There is something very impacting about a child of God who is able to praise Him even in the face of trials and difficulty.

The same can be said for all creation. Maybe God's children could take a lesson from creation as it praises God. *Let heaven and earth praise him, the seas and everything that moves in them (v.34).*

The difference between people and the rest of creation is that people might praise God, but the creation **will** praise God. David also concluded that, *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard (Psalm 19:1-3).*

One of my favorite things is to look up into the night sky and just marvel at the array of heavenly lights, the moon, and the planets. Sometimes it brings tears to my eyes and just say, "God you are so amazing!" We **should** praise God like His creation does. We should live in a way that reflects God's character which will be to His praise. What we say should speak plainly about God's character of love and faithfulness.

Why? What happens when we respond out of discouragement with praise to God? First, we learn that praise pleases God. *This will please the LORD more than an ox or a bull with horns and hoofs (v.31).* God hears our cries for help, our complaints about how difficult our trial is. And He very kindly and mercifully intervenes in our circumstances so much of the time. But God is pleased with praise, the correct assessment of His goodness and faithfulness.

Furthermore, when we praise God even in difficulty, it encourages the humble. *When the humble see it they will be glad; you who seek God, let your hearts revive (v.32).* Humble people are folks who have come to the end of themselves. They know their hope is in God alone. They are glad to know that God hears and answers the cry of the discouraged. Therefore, we who trust God should seek God with confidence and let our hearts revive. The Hebrew word for revive means "to quicken, to restore to life." Discouragement saps the life from us. It is much better for us to present ourselves to God and allow Him to revive, to give us a new lease on life.

Why? Why cry out to God, why praise God, why let the humble see us resorting to God when we are troubled? The Lord hears. *For the LORD hears the needy (v.33a).* It is good and okay for me to admit that I am needy. The truly needy have confidence that God hears when you cry.

The Lord does not despise. The Lord hears the needy *and does not despise his own people who are prisoners (v.33b).* We are prisoners to the principle of sin. We are prisoners to the sins of others.

We are prisoners (slaves) to our own particular sins. Prisoners and slaves are not the most honored people the world has known. Sadly, that is the true condition of every person. Most people just never admit it. When we are humbled by our trials and appeal to God, He knows better than we do how needy we are. He does not despise prisoners but sets us free in Christ.

To deny that there is suffering in the world is foolish. To overlook the suffering of our Christian brothers and sisters is heartless. To sympathize with those who suffer is Christ's commands. Christ's rule for the Church is, *If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together (1 Corinthians 12:26)*. Another rule is, *Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep (Romans 12:15)*. But in our acknowledgment of suffering and our expressions of sympathy with the sufferer, we do best to offer hope. Our hope is in Job's God who was in control of the whole process of suffering. Our hope is fixed firmly on the many, many promises of the Bible. We have so much more reason to hope than Job had.