

I WANT TO KNOW MY BIBLE

What To Do When Bad things Happen

Reading: Job 25-42

Text: Job 38-42

INTRODUCTION: I step to the pulpit today to preach the second sermon in a row out of the Book of Job knowing that most of you have struggled with reading this book this last two weeks. I have heard many comments to this effect, and in fact the most quoted verse of Job I have encountered has been

Job 16:3a Shall words of wind have an end?

Yet I appeal to you to hang in there with me this morning as we focus our attention on the final chapters of what is probably the first book of Holy Scripture ever penned.

British Lord Alfred Tennyson, the poet Laureate of England during the Victorian era, author of Ulysses and Charge of the Light Brigade, and whose works you probably had to study if you graduated high school in these United States, **called the Book of Job, “the greatest poem of ancient or modern times.”**

But I ask you to give this work, inspired by the Holy Spirit ages ago, another hearing this morning because it answers a question we are asking and to which we desperately need an answer.

I need this answer.

You need this answer.

We all have family and friends who are in critical need of the answer God offers us in this book.

What is the question? There are two:

- 1. Why do bad things happen in this world?**
- 2. What should we do when bad things happen?**

Already, with the considerable help of the Book of Job we have seen the answer to the first question.

- 1. Why do bad things happen in this world?**

- **God allows bad things to happen to accomplish His greater purposes.**
- **God allows bad things to happen to bring about good for people.**
- **Bad things happen as a consequence of evil.**
 - **We are the territory being fought over in an unseen war.**

Ephesians 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

- In that battle, Satan desires to
 - **Kill us**
 - **Steal what God has given**
 - **Destroy our lives**

Now, today, out of the Book of Job, we will see what we can do when bad things happen.

Surely Job was an expert. He was the wealthiest, most respected man in the days of the patriarchs, and he had a wonderful family. Then in a single day, he lost it all. Then on another day, not long after, he lost his health. I don't mean he got a little sick, I mean he lost every bit of his good health except his very life.

Job had itching, inflamed, ulcerous sores (2:7-8); degenerative changes in facial skin (2:7,12); loss of appetite (3:24); depression (3:24-25); nightmares (7:14); worms in boils (7:5); hardened skin and running sores (7:5); difficulty in breathing (9:18); dark eyelids, failing vision (16:16); foul breath (19:17); rotting teeth (19:20); weight loss (19:20; 33:21); continual pain (30:17); restlessness (30:27); peeling, blackened skin (30:30); fever (30:30); lasted at least for several months (7:3; 29:2).

Now remember that Job is no stranger to God or to His ways. The Lord Himself described Job as an upright man who feared God and shunned evil. When he lost fortune and family Job mourned but still worshipped, saying,

Job 1:21b The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD."

While he sat on the ash heap of sorrow, scraping his sores with a broken shard of pottery, he rebuked his wife for suggesting suicide, saying,

Job 2:10 "...Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?"

He was saying in essence, “There is more to life than just the good times. We are here for a purpose.” Oh that we might have his understanding, that our lives are not about self gratification, that God does not place us here just so that we can move from thrill to thrill and blessing to blessing.

But while Job did not sin in blaming God or accusing God of wrongdoing, he clearly did not understand why these terrible things had happened, were happening, in his life. **And the three friends who came to “comfort” him did not help at all.**

- **Eliphaz said, “Job, you suffer because you have sinned.”**
- **Bildad said, “And you won’t admit it, so you are a hypocrite.”**
- **Zophar said, “No wonder bad things have happened to you. You are a wicked man.”**
(And they said it over and over and over again!)

But they were wrong. God said He was angry with them for they did not speak correctly about the Lord.

- **The problem was not that sin never causes bad things to happen.**
- **The problem is that sin is not the only thing that causes bad things to happen.**

Throughout their discourses, Job steadfastly maintains his innocence, and we even see within Job a persistent faith in the Almighty. Job must feel certain that his deteriorating condition must be leading him to death, and he cries out,

Job 19:25–26 ²⁵ For I know *that* my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; ²⁶ And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God,

Then comes Elihu, who is caustic and sarcastic to the three friends but speaks with greater courtesy to Job; and later God has no rebuke for his words. If time allowed us to dig into his words in chapter 33, we could find a foreshadowing of the gospel.

But although Elihu speaks rightly of God as

- **altogether just and righteous**, never doing wickedly, and as
- **the Impartial Sovereign** Who is no respecter of persons, and as
- **the Judge Who sees everything**,

none of this brings Job closer to understanding nor closer to consolation.

Then God speaks and everything changes.

Friend, listen. When God speaks to you, everything changes. With the same words He spoke to Job recorded in chapters 38 to 42, God wants to speak to you. Now none of you look as bad as Job, but some of you are hurting like Job. Others of us have Job like times ahead of us, and only God knows when they will arrive. All of us have bad, bad things that are going to come our way, and God wants to speak a word to us that will have us navigate those roads successfully though not necessarily painlessly.

Would you join me in prayer and earnestly ask God from the depth of your heart to speak to you directly this morning? Pray,

Listen to what God said, and then I shall show you what Job did and what you can do to make the bad times better.

God said, “Job ...

- **I understand things you don't understand.**
 - I set the measurements of the earth so you and all mankind could live upon it. Thousands of years from now, Job, your descendents will still be trying to figure it out.
 - You can't quite figure out this thing called light. One day they will say it's a particle, and another day it's a wave. Then they will call it a wave-particle, but still they do not understand. I understand, because I made it.
 - Even the snow, Job, even the snow. After a good snowfall there are trillions of individual flakes, no two of them the same. You cannot understand it. I designed it.
 - Job, century after century, man will not be able to understand the weather. I design and control weather.

I understand things you don't understand.
- **I can do the things you will never be able to do.**
 - Like control the gravitational forces of the stars.
 - Design the ecosystem of the earth to sustain the life of animals I created.
 - Like fill the planet with an endless variety of life forms whose designs and ways go beyond man's greatest imagination.

I can do the things you will never be able to do.
- **I alone am worthy to be God upon the throne.**
 - Could you rule as God in judgment over the universe?
 - Could you reign in majesty as a king?
 - Could you surround yourself with glory and splendor?
 - Could you deal with the haughty pride of men?

I alone am worthy to be God upon the throne.
- **And you, dear Job, are lost in your own self-sufficiency and pride.**
 - And at this point God brings forth two amazing examples.
 - He tells Job to consider two gigantic dinosaurs that indeed live up to the meaning of the name, “terrible lizard.”
 - First the Lord tells Job to look at Behemoth, probably a Brachiosaurus.

Job 40:15 – 41:34 “Look now at the behemoth, which I made *along* with you;

... ¹⁶ See now, his strength *is* in his hips, And his power *is* in his stomach muscles. ¹⁷ He moves his tail like a cedar; ... ¹⁸ His bones *are like* beams of bronze, His ribs like bars of iron.

- But God shows him Behemoth as an illustration of one who is arrogantly self-sufficient.

¹⁹ He *is* the first of the ways of God; Only He who made him can bring near His sword.
²⁰ Surely the mountains yield food for him, ... ²³ Indeed the river may rage, Yet he is not disturbed; He is confident, though the Jordan gushes into his mouth,

- And God shows Job another dinosaur called Leviathan that is very deserving of the description of some kind of sea monster.

¹ “Can you draw out Leviathan with a hook, Or *snare* his tongue with a line *which* you lower? ² Can you put a reed through his nose, Or pierce his jaw with a hook?

⁷ Can you fill his skin with harpoons, Or his head with fishing spears? ⁸ Lay your hand on him; Remember the battle— Never do it again!

¹⁴ Who can open the doors of his face, *With* his terrible teeth all around? ¹⁵ *His* rows of scales are *his* pride, Shut up tightly as *with* a seal; ¹⁶ One is so near another That no air can come between them; ¹⁷ They are joined one to another, They stick together and cannot be parted.

- And this dinosaur is like a dragon that shoots fire from nostrils and mouth

¹⁸ His sneezings flash forth light, And his eyes *are* like the eyelids of the morning. ¹⁹ Out of his mouth go burning lights; Sparks of fire shoot out. ²⁰ Smoke goes out of his nostrils, As *from* a boiling pot and burning rushes. ²¹ His breath kindles coals, And a flame goes out of his mouth.

And if you think this is getting a bit fanciful, that dinosaurs did not live on the earth with men and no animal could ever shoot fire from its mouth, then you need to come **tonight** when we are going to be **digging deeper** and taking a look at **Dinosaurs in Bible Times**, and I will tell you about an animal today that shoots fire.

- But again, God is not merely showing off His handiwork in creation. He has picked a creature that offers a vivid portrayal of haughty pride. Listen to some of the things God points about Leviathan of Job.

³ Will he make many supplications to you? Will he speak softly to you? ⁴ Will he make a covenant with you? Will you take him as a servant forever? ⁵ Will you play with him as *with* a bird, Or will you leash him for your maidens?

²² Strength dwells in his neck, ... ²⁴ His heart is as hard as stone, ... ³³ On earth there is nothing like him, ... He *is* king over all the children of pride.”

You, dear Job, are like these two beasts, lost in your own self-sufficiency and pride.

And Job heeded the word of the Lord. He did what God wanted him to do, and in doing so, Job showed us what to do. It is actually what we ought to do all the time, but it is especially what we need to do when bad things happen, to get us through the bad times and on to better times.

I. REVERENCE THE LORD.

A. Repent

- 1. Not just of individual sins**
- 2. Of self-sufficiency**
- 3. Of pride**

Job 42:1–3, 6 ¹ Then Job answered the LORD and said: ² “I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. ³ You asked, ‘Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?’ Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. ... ⁶ Therefore I abhor myself, And repent in dust and ashes.”

B. Honor God for Who He Is.

C. Worship the Lord continually.

Wherever you go, go around singing songs of praise and adoration. Use Christian radio or CD or iPod or whatever to help you if you need it.

“Bless the Lord. oh my soul, oh my soul; Worship His Holy Name.
Sing like never before, oh my soul. I worship Your Holy Name.”

II. TRUST THE LORD.

Job 42:5 “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You.

III. INTERCEDE FOR OTHERS.

God sent Job’s three friends so called to Job for Job to intercede for them, because the Lord had accepted Job!

A. By Understanding

B. In Prayer

C. Through the Gospel

Folks, listen to this word from the Lord this morning. This works.

I would never claim that I have been through hard times that even come close to what Job experienced. I haven't. But I have been through some times that were tough enough I hope to never have them repeated. I confess that only one of those times was the pain so bad that I responded pretty much like Job.

I didn't go sit on an ash heap, but I went home in the middle of the day and just plopped down in my chair. No TV, no computer, no book, no anything. For the first and only time since God called me to preach when I was a senior in high school, I contemplated resigning. For hours I just sat and stared and thought about it.

But praise be to God, brooding gave way to prayer.

I confessed my own insufficiency for the situation, my inability to handle it, my total incapacity to control the outcome and committed it all to the Lord. I just said, "God, I trust You to work me though this, and wherever You lead I'll follow, no matter what."

Prayer gave way to song, and in my most feeble way I began to praise the Lord.

"I need thee, oh I need thee. Every hour I need thee. Oh bless me now, my Savior, I come to Thee."

And God brought me through. Now He didn't double my net worth like He did for Job, but He got me through!

And he allowed me to intercede for others hurting in tough times, a thing I can do better because of having been there.

CONCLUSION: Somewhere in your Bible, near the end of the Book of Job, you ought to write down these words.

Reverence and Worship the Lord

Trust God

Intercede for others

When bad things happen and you feel a kinship with Job, open your Bible to his book and do what he did.