

Lessons From the Life of Job

by William MacDonald

William MacDonald explores the profound lessons from the life of Job, emphasizing the nature of suffering and the importance of faith and worship in trials.

Duration: 29:17

Scripture: Job 1:13, Job 1:16-21, John 13:7

Topics: "Life Of Job"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Job from the book of Job in the Bible. He highlights how Job's endurance proved Satan to be a false accuser and a liar. The preacher emphasizes that our lives are on display, and the spirit world is watching to see how we respond to trials and suffering. He emphasizes that a person's possessions do not define their worth, and no matter what happens to our possessions or family, we should trust and praise God. The sermon references specific verses from Job chapter 1 to support these points.

Transcript

Turn to the book of Job, please. Job, chapter 1. I'd like to begin reading in verse 13. Job, chapter 1, verse 13.

It says, Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house. And a messenger came to Job and said the oxen were plowing, and the donkeys eating beside them, when the Sibeans raided them and took them away. Indeed, they have killed the servants to the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you.

While he was still speaking, another also came and said the fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them. I alone have escaped to tell you. While he was still speaking, another also came and said the Chaldeans formed three bands, raided the camels and took them away.

Yes, and killed the servants to the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you. While he was still speaking, another also came and said your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house. And suddenly a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young men, and they are dead.

But I alone have escaped to tell you. Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshipped. He said, naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there.

The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, lest it be the name of the Lord. Of all this did Job not sin, nor charge God with wrongs. I've been thinking a lot this week about that incident that happened down in Bolivia.

Merlin and Marian Schultz, serving the Lord in Puerto Chelo, and Merlin and his son Jeff were up in La Paz Wednesday of this week. La Paz, the elevation there is about 12,000 feet. The oxygen is very rare.

In fact, there's only one fire engine in the whole city of La Paz, because the fire doesn't have much chance to get a start there. Jeff had run up and down a couple of flights of stairs. He fell.

His father tried to revive him, and he was gone. You wonder, how would you cope with a situation like that? What does it mean? What is the meaning behind all of this? A young fellow in good health, nothing the matter with his health. One minute he's running up and down stairs, the next minute he's dead.

It made me think of the book of Job. He lost not one son in a day, but seven sons in a day. You say, why did this happen? And the answer is, we don't know.

But we do get some lessons from the book of Job, and I'd like to go over some of them with you today. Certainly one of the first things we know in the book of Job is that the righteous are not exempt from suffering. God testified concerning Job that he was the most righteous man on the face of the earth, and yet no man in the history of the world except the Lord Jesus ever suffered as much loss as Job did in a single day.

Imagine that! A righteous man, and he suffered tremendous loss. Stroke after stroke came into his life, and he said, the Lord has given, the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord. Certainly this book tells us that suffering is not necessarily a result of sin.

You think of that missionary couple down there, spending their lives in the cause of Christ, taking the gospel to people who desperately need it, and here they're plunged into sorrow and sadness practically in a moment of time. I thought it was very moving that when Merlin went back with the body of his son to Porto Suelo, the town was deserted. There was nobody there, but when he got to his own house, they were all there.

They were all there to express their sympathy and their condolences to him, his wife. Rather a moving outflow, outpouring of sympathy. We learn also from the book of Job that God has a protective hedge about his people.

Satan could not have got at Job if the Lord hadn't permitted it, and I think that's a tremendously encouraging thing to know. You belong to the Lord Jesus Christ as a hedge around you, and you're absolutely immortal till your work is done. And I believe that.

I believe that you follow the ordinary rules of health and safety. Nothing can happen to you ahead of God's pre-arranged time. We see that in the case of Job.

It was only by God's permission that Satan was allowed to test him in this way. Satan was saying, it's just because of what he gets from you that he loves you, that he worships you. You take away the material things, and he'll curse you to your face.

But he didn't. I think it's very important to see in the book of Job that God does not send sickness or suffering. I believe that.

I believe that no evil, no sin, no calamity, no pain, no sickness or suffering comes from God. They all come from the devil. God permits them, and what he permits, he is often said to do.

Like Job says here, the Lord has given, and the Lord has taken away. Did the Lord take away? No, it was the Lord that took away. It was Satan who took away, but God permitted it, and what God permits, he is often said to do in the Bible.

I find that a very helpful key in the study of the Bible, because I come across a verse like this, an evil spirit from the Lord came upon Saul. An evil spirit from the Lord came upon Saul? Not really, but God permitted an evil spirit to come upon Saul, and so God is said to be the one who sent it. You have that in many places is the word of God, but God doesn't send sickness.

In Luke chapter 13, you have the story of a woman with curvature of the spine, and Jesus said of her, "...whom Satan hath bound low these eighteen years." It was Satan who had bound her, not God. Paul had a thorn in the flesh. He said, "...the messenger of Satan to buffet me." It was some physical affliction.

We don't know what it was, but we do know it came from Satan, and God permits these things to happen in our lives, and then he overrules them for his glory, for the good of the person involved, and for the blessing of others. That's a wonderful thing. God allows Satan to have a long leash, and then God gets glory out of it.

This is one of the wonderful things in this world in which we live, in the conflict between God and evil, and how God comes off triumphantly every time, although we don't understand it down here. And it's really not necessary that we should understand it down here. We can trust his wisdom, love, and power without necessarily understanding what he is doing.

We see in the book of Job how Satan does have certain power. He has power in the realm of wicked men. You read about him controlling the Sabaeans and the Chaldeans, the Babylonians, who struck at Job.

You see that Satan has a certain amount of power in supernatural disasters, the fire that came from heaven, and in the weather, the great wind that came, in sickness, the boils that came upon Job. What a terrible affliction that was! Probably few of us have ever experienced anything like that, and then even death itself. But Satan is not omnipotent.

He doesn't have all power. There are restraints on him, as you read so vividly in this book. And, as we mentioned, Satan can only bring these things on a child of God by God's permission, and God had a purpose in doing that.

Job had said, he loves you for what he gets out of you. Job said, okay, we'll put it to the test. God said, we'll put it to the test.

Does he love me just for what he gets out of me? And the book of Job shows that God can be loved for himself alone, quite apart from the blessings that he bestows. And, in that sense, Job vindicated God and proved Satan to be a liar. That was wonderful, isn't it? Job is stripped, as it were, fair, and he says, the Lord has given, the Lord has taken away, lest it be the name of the Lord.

Did you notice that word? He worshipped. He fell to the ground and worshipped. And, I think that's an amazing thing, that no matter what happens to us in life, no matter how sad, how tragic it might be, we can know by faith that God is working out his purposes and fulfilling his promises.

To me, that's tremendous. Just see beyond the immediate sorrow, see beyond the immediate sadness, and know that God is working out his purposes and fulfilling all the promises that he's ever made. I think it was Spurgeon who said, and it's very, very helpful to me, we can't always trace God's hand, but we can always touch his heart.

Good to remember that. A lot of things in life that happen, and there's just a big question mark over them. Why does this have to be? You can't always trace God's hand, but you can always touch his heart.

And, he hasn't made his first mistake yet. He said to Peter, what I do, you don't know now, but you will know if you're asked it. And, heaven will be the best place to see God working, and how he used all of these things in our lives.

Not till the loom is silent, and the shuttle keeps to fly, will God unroll the canvas and explain the reason why the dark threads were as needful in the weaver's skillful hands as the threads of gold and silver in the patterns he had planned. That's absolutely true. We should see things as coming from the hand of the Lord, that is, by his permission, and not just from Satan.

Because, if he permits it, he has a purpose in permitting it, and we are to glorify him in it. Sister in our assembly, a few weeks ago, went through surgery, and it was kind of a life-threatening situation. I spoke to her after it was all over.

She said, Phil, she said, that was one of the greatest weeks in my life. I said, why? She said, I felt closer to God. I knew the presence and power of God, and the peace that he can give at a time like that.

She says, I've never known it before. So, here she was, worshiping God as a result of a life-threatening situation. It's true, isn't it? It's true that sometimes, in the great crises of life, we're flooded with the peace of Christ.

Naturally speaking, we would be worried to death. You say, that's not me. It must be the Lord, and it is.

It is the Lord that gives that. I see in the book of Job that God does not always give the reason for our suffering. He didn't give it to Job, but there is a reason for it, and it's enough to know that.

We know that suffering produces endurance in the life. There are graces in the Christian life that can never be developed in sunshine. If our lives were all sunshine, they'd be desert.

God knows that. So, we ask to allow these things to come into our life, to produce the fruit of the Spirit of God in our lives. I think we learn a lesson from those three miserable comforters who came to Job, and they were really Johnny One Notes.

Those three men, and their argument was this. Look, sin produces suffering. You are suffering, therefore you must have sinned very greatly.

That was the sum and substance of what they're saying. Here's a man who's suffering greatly. The only conclusion is he must have sinned greatly.

Incidentally, that's exactly what the crowd at the cross of Calvary said concerning the Lord Jesus. We esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. They saw him there hanging on a cross of wood, and they thought, he must have sinned greatly to be suffering so greatly.

Stricken, smitten of God, under the judgment of God for sins that he had committed, but he was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. Chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.

Job's comforters were right in stating a generality, but they were wrong in applying it to Job. Every general statement has exceptions, and Job was an exception to the case. And, if their behavior teaches us anything, it teaches us we should not be judgmental when other people are passing through the fire.

It teaches us the necessity of a good bedside manner, and leaving God to make the ultimate decision. Those comforters also tell me that human reasonings are not helpful, that really only in the long run only God can really comfort us when we're going through trial and tribulation. I mean, thank God for Christian friends who crowd around us and seek to say things that will uplift our spirits, but there are times in life when no human word will do.

You have to get that word directly from the Lord, and then your heart is at peace. Ultimately, he's the only one who can help us. At the end of the book of Job, we see that the Lord is merciful and full of pity.

He didn't just throw Job off into the scrap heap. He restored him. So, at the end of the book, Job had double what he had before.

The Lord is tender, merciful, full of pity, and we also learn that sometimes the wrongs of this life are righted in this life, but not always. Not always. They were in Job's case, but they're not in every case.

Sometimes we just have to wait to heaven, until we get to heaven, to realize what God was working out through it all. Job's endurance in suffering vindicated God. Satan said, he'll curse you to your face.

Job didn't. Job sputtered. We have the expression, the patience of Job.

A poor word to use there. Actually, it's the endurance of Job. Job wasn't the most patient man, if you read the book.

He did quite a bit of complaining, but he endured. He never turned his back on God. That's a wonderful thing.

A few weeks ago, I was in Scotland, and there was a man attending a meeting, a fine Christian man, in his late 80s, I think. As a young man, he had run in a race with Eric Little of Chariots of Fire fame. I ran out as he was entering the meeting.

I said to him, Good evening, Brother Waddles. How are you? He said to me, in the words of Jeremiah, should a living man complain? I said, did Jeremiah say that? He said, oh yes. The next night, he came to

me with a reference in Lamentations.

Should a living man complain? That spoke loudly to my heart, because for the next month, I was traveling in Europe and kind of being batted around like a ping-pong ball from one place to another. You tend to feel sorry for yourself, and I think of old Brother Waddles, should a living man complain? It really spoke to my heart. As we mentioned before, Job's endurance proved Satan to be a false accuser and a liar.

You ever think of that when you're suffering, when you're going through trial? Actually, you're on parade. Actually, your life is on display, and the spirit world is watching to see how we respond unto those things. What's our attitude going to be to the Lord? Are we going to vindicate him by our behavior? Are we going to think beneath the loaves? Job teaches us that a man's possessions, a man is greater than the things that he possesses, and no matter what may befall his possessions or his family, God is just as truly to be trusted and praised as he was before.

None of us is exempt from suffering and sickness and trial in life. It's a wonderful opportunity to glorify God in it. I think the Lord Jesus gave us a great example of that, didn't he? But he said, nevertheless, Father, so it seems good in thy sight.

Great words for us to take upon our lips when we're passing through the fire and the flood. Nevertheless, Father, for so it seems good in thy sight. And as he prayed in Gethsemane, not my will, but thine, be done.

Suffering, we learn, purges our lives of dross so that the Lord can see his image reflected more clearly in us. We saw one who really suffered the ultimate, didn't he? That's why the writer to the Hebrews says to the people of his day who were suffering, who were going through persecution, you have not yet resisted unto blood. And in that verse, to resist unto blood means to die.

The Lord Jesus went all the way for us. We have not yet resisted unto blood. And, of course, suffering like Job was through enables the child of God to comfort others in a way we never could do before.

I remember when I was at Emmaus one morning, we got an early telephone call that Dan and Martha Smith's little baby had died, a crib death, and it was a very traumatic experience. I had the funeral. It was a bleak day, gray sky, snow falling, and we stood there at the grave.

Everything was cold, but Mrs. McCulley was there. She had lost a son, an adult son, in Ecuador, and she came to comfort Martha. And she could comfort him, her, in a way I couldn't do.

I never lost a son. And how oftentimes in the history of the Christian church, God has used that. We go through suffering, we go through trial, so that we can comfort others with a comfort with which we are comforted by God.

And I know that some of you here could testify to that today. Then when we suffer too, it's a way in which we can share in the non-atoning sufferings of Christ. So often you visit people in the hospital, and they are suffering, and they say, yes, but it's nothing compared to what he suffered for me.

It gives you a deeper appreciation of what the Savior went through when he took our sins, heavy loads, on himself on the accursed tree. Then, as we suggested, the suffering of the believer is an object lesson to the angelic host, that they can look down and see a believer suffering, and still worshiping the Lord, still pouring out his heart in worship and adoration to the Lord, still able to say, the Lord has given, the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord. And then, of course, and with this I close, the suffering

of a child of God is a pledge of the glory that's going to come.

That isn't true for an unbeliever. Unbelievers suffer too, but their suffering is only a foretaste of the pangs of eternal punishment. It's sad, isn't it? But the sufferings of the child of God are a pledge of coming glory.

If we suffer with him to be glorified together, we shall reign with him. So, it's wonderful that we can trust God in all of the varying circumstances of life, and know that he is in perfect control. When things seem to be out of control, God is in perfect control.

He's working out his purposes, keeping his promises. One day, we'll see it. Today, we see through a glass darkness, then face to face.

Come and pray. Father, we do think of this dear family down in Bolivia today, mourning the loss of a son taken so quickly from them. We think of many of your people who are going through deep waters today, we just pray, Lord, that you'll speak words of comfort to them that no other friend can speak.

Pray that they might know your sustaining presence in all of these things. And perhaps there are some here in the meeting today, and they have burdens that nobody else knows about. Father, we pray that through it all, they might look to you, not see these things as coming as second causes, but coming directly from your hand, and worship you in it.

We ask it in the Savior's name. Amen.

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