

Hope For The Hard Times Part 10

We have come to the final chapter of Job. We will wrap this series up in the next couple of weeks. I want to look at this final chapter tonight but I want to come back and just give an overview of some of the important lessons we've learned from our study.

This is the Paul Harvey ending. We read this final chapter and we can say, "and now you know, the rest of the story." For some of us, I will admit, it doesn't exactly resolve the issues raised by Job's suffering, but we do see a transformation that occurs in Job. Regardless of the reason for the suffering, the benefit that results, the enlightenment that comes to Job's life and the revelation of God that he experiences seem to redeem the earlier events.

Turn with me to Job 42:1-6. **"Then Job replied to the Lord: 'I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted.' You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?' 'Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.' You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.' 'My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.'" Job 42:1-6**

Job had wanted to make his appeal to God, he wanted to put God on the witness stand and ask him some questions. Job wanted to defend himself— to lay out his case for innocence before the Lord. But the truth is, Job wasn't innocent. None of us are innocent. God declared that Job was "blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil," but he did not say he was sinless or innocent. Only Jesus was sinless and totally innocent. Job was blameless, he was not overtly committing sin, but he was a sinner nevertheless.

Job was blameless, but before it was all over, I think there was a certain sense of pride and self-righteousness that began to fill his heart. He was asserting his righteousness, based upon his own good works and his own moral goodness. That would not work. That will never work, for the Bible tells us in Romans, **"there is no one righteous, not even one...there is no one who does good, not even one...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."** Romans 3

By the time God finished asking Job a few questions, Job realizes God is greater than he imagined, greater than he understood. Job still has no understanding of what all has just occurred. Heaven has won a victory over Satan and the forces of hell through the life and integrity of Job, but he doesn't know it, he just knows he has come through hell's onslaught and

in the process he has come to a new understanding, a new revelation of the Mighty God he serves. He knows that God is present in the time of trouble because God spoke to him out of the storm. Aren't you glad God still speaks to us out of the storms of our life? **Job learned after he lost everything, he still had all he needed – he still had the Lord!** Job didn't know the "why" behind all of this, but as we said before, Job knew who! Job knew who was with him, who loved him and who would carry him through. He didn't have to know why as long as he knew who.

Job comes to the end of himself, his ability, his understanding, his righteousness, and realizes none of it is enough and so he repents. The bible says he "repented in dust and ashes." Job humbled himself and submitted himself completely to the Lord. Look at Job's response.

Job recognized God's sovereignty. Job recognized the fact God was ultimately in control of the universe and consequently, he has the right to be in control of Job's life. We need to realize it as well. God has the right and authority to rule in our lives. God alone is sovereign and we need to admit it, believe it and rejoice in it. God's sovereignty is not something to fear. It is good news. I said last time God is God, we're not, that settles it. God is God and we can and should accept his plan and his purpose for our lives. Why is that not frightening? Because we know that God loves us and the plans he has for us are for our good and not our harm. That's good news!

Job said, "I understand that you can do all things and that no plan of yours can be thwarted." God's plans ultimately can't be overturned by Satan, by man, by circumstances. God rules and reigns, he is sovereign, he is all powerful, he loves us and he can do all things. What a combination!

Years later, King Nebuchadnezzar would make a similar statement to that of Job's in Daniel 4. Nebuchadnezzar was filled with pride and God caused him to lose his mind because of his pride. Look at what he said in Daniel 4:34 **"At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: 'What have you done?'"** Daniel 4:34-35

Nebuchadnezzar then declares that at that time his sanity was restored and he was

restored to his throne as King. After that he says **“I praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.” Daniel 4:37.**

Job learned it before Nebuchadnezzar did. God is able to humble those who walk in pride. He can do anything and everything he does is right. Job recognized God’s sovereignty over his life.

Job recognized God’s ways are above our ways. “Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.” Job admits he had talked about things that were beyond him, things beyond human understanding. He had spoken about spiritual realities as though he knew as much as God did. The truth is, there are mysteries in our walk with the Lord that we will never figure out. Deuteronomy 29:29 says **“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.” Deut. 29:29**

The apostle Paul wrote, **“Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?” Romans 11:33-34.**

Job had come to realize that God’s ways really are above our ways. He had come to understand that we live with mystery in our Christian life. Jerry Bridges wrote, “We need to be cautious of others who offer themselves as interpreters about the why and wherefore of all that is happening. Be wary of those who say, ‘God let this happen so that you might learn such and such a lesson.’ The fact is, we do not know what God is doing through a particular set of circumstances or events.” God is doing things on so many levels, involving so many people, on levels and in ways we cannot begin to imagine, in time and beyond time. God’s ways are above our ways. I wonder how many times we have all been guilty, like Job, of speaking of things we did not understand?

Job learned the importance of a teachable spirit. We have heard Job speaking as though he had all the answers, but after flunking God’s exam in the past couple of chapters, Job realized he would be better off closing his mouth and opening his ears to listen and learn from the Lord. He realized why God gave him only one mouth but two ears. We ought to listen twice as much as we speak. No longer was Job ready to speak and lecture everyone on life and how to

live it. Now he was responding in obedience to God's command to listen as God spoke to him. Job learned the importance of having a teachable spirit. It made all the difference.

None of us are beyond learning something new, regardless of our age or our place in life. That old saying about "you can't teach an old dogs new tricks" is only partly true. I think old dogs can learn new tricks if those old dogs want to learn, if they have a teachable spirit. I've seen people refuse to learn anything new, whether it was how to use a computer or a smart phone or whether it involved relationships and even their relationship with the Lord. It wasn't because they were too old, age had nothing to do with it really. It was because they were too stubborn and unwilling to learn and grow.

What I'm trying to tell you is that God still has some things he would like to teach each one of us, regardless of our age or stage in life. The key is having a teachable spirit, a willingness to learn, an openness to the things of God and to whatever God wants to show us and teach us. There is so much I need to learn. We won't ever be able to say "we have arrived" in this life because the potential is there for all of us to keep learning from the depths of the riches of his knowledge and wisdom. Keep a teachable spirit.

Job had a fresh revelation of the God he knew. Job admits his understanding of God had been faulty, limited. It was still limited, but he had a new and much greater revelation of God, of who he was and of how he related to men, than he had before all of the troubles came. Job said, "**My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you.**" You know how significant that is don't you? Have you ever spoken with someone over the phone, or perhaps chatted with them over the internet? You have heard them, but you have never seen them. And then you meet them in person. Your understanding changes dramatically. That's how Job's relationship to God had changed over this period of time. That's how profoundly he had been changed by his circumstances and what he had learned from the Lord. Job now saw God with new vision, new eyes of faith. He saw God with a new and deeper spiritual understanding.

In the storms and troubles of your life, God is still revealing himself to his children in ever deepening ways, in ever richer ways. Don't think God has forsaken or forgotten you. He has his eye upon you and he will speak to you in the storm and reveal himself to you. Trust Him! You may learn more in the storm than you ever learned in the peace and calm.

Job repented of the pretentious words he had spoken against God. "Therefore I

despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.”

Job had leveled a number of charges against God and now he repents. He repents of his pride, of his actions and his attitudes. Repenting in dust and ashes was a cultural sign of both humility and grief. This action showed he was truly sorry for what he had said and done.

Humility is so important. It is not that we never make a mistake or sin, but that we are truly grieved and sorrowful when we do. David was called a man after God’s own heart, not because he was without sin, but because he never turned away from God’s heart, and when he sinned, he repented with sorrow and remorse and grief— just like Job did at the end.

Job humbled himself before the Lord. The bible tells us that God opposes the proud but he gives grace and mercy to the humble. One writer said, “We are never more like the Devil than when we are trying to elevate ourselves. And never more like Christ than when we humble ourselves.” (Steve Lawson)

Steven Lawson writes concerning Job: “What a victory this is! God has won His wager with Satan. Job has worshiped God despite having his blessings removed. The devil must now eat crow. He has lost the battle for Job’s soul. Unknown to Job, God has won a great victory over Satan through his life. Job has brought glory to God by not cursing Him as Satan said he would. His faith in God, though weak[ened] has remained true. The storm has passed.” And now comes a new beginning for Job.

A New Beginning Look what happens:

God restores Job’s friends. Of course you remember Job’s friends, his comforters that came and accused him. Well, God has something to say to them. (Except for Elihu who is not mentioned.) He speaks to Eliphaz, “**I am angry with you and your two friends because you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.**” **Job 42:7**

God was upset with Job’s friends because they had misrepresented God. They distorted the picture of who God really was. How had they misrepresented God? They had limited God’s sovereignty among other things. They tried to fit God into a formula. They claimed that human suffering was always God’s judgment for sin. And, they claimed to know why Job was suffering. They took suffering, typed that concept into their computer and into their little formula and it spit out the only possible reason. They decided that Job was a sinner, guilty of some secret sin and that’s why he was having all this trouble. No other reason would fit their formula.

I heard Fred Price preaching about Job, say the reason Job suffered all of this trouble is because he had fear rather than faith. “That which I feared has come upon me.” In my opinion, Fred was guilty of the same thing as Job’s friends. His argument says, “Fear is sin and because Job was afraid, because he spoke his fears instead of faith, God had no choice but to let all of that stuff come upon him.” Forget the fact that God said to the devil - “have you considered my servant Job - he is blameless and upright and he shuns evil.”

We misrepresent God and do an injustice to his word when we try to fit them both into man-made formulas. The bible is not a book of formulas for us to try to discover and then apply. It is the revelation of God to us. It is the story and revelation of his mercy and grace. It is the revelation of an Almighty God, a sovereign God that acts in ways beyond our understanding at times. Job’s friends forgot that, and we forget that as well at times.

God told Eliphaz and his friends to offer sacrifice, but they were to go to Job for prayer (Job 42:7-9). It is as though God put Job in the place of a priest. He was to participate in their sacrifice, praying for them that God would forgive them and accept their burnt offering. It is interesting to remember that in Job 22:23, Eliphaz had told Job that if he would repent God would forgive him and restore him. Now it is Eliphaz that is having to repent and Job, this man whom he had accused of being a terrible sinner, was now going to intercede to God on his behalf.

Job had to pray for his friends. They were asking God to forgive them by offering a sacrifice, and God was asking Job to forgive them, just as God had forgiven Job when he repented. God wanted Job to participate in the process of forgiveness. When Job repented to the Lord, and when Job prayed for his friends, forgiving them and releasing them from his personal anger, God released the blessings of heaven upon Job once again (Job 42:10)

Forgiveness is a key. If we don’t forgive others, Jesus said our heavenly father would not forgive us. The Bible says, “**Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.**” **Ephesians 4:32.** I’m amazed at folks that have been shown such mercy and then they withhold mercy from others. Quick to ask forgiveness and slow to forgive. It ought not to be. If you don’t forgive others, you are blocking the blessings of God. Keep your heart pure, open.

Verse 9 tells us the Eliphaz and Bildad and Zophar “**did what the Lord told them; and**

the Lord accepted Job's prayer."

How gracious and faithful the Lord is. The truth is, all of these guys, Job included, and all of us have sinned and missed the mark. All of us are in need of God's mercy and grace. And one of the lessons learned in this final chapter is that it is only by God's mercy and grace that we are saved. We can't save ourselves. Someone has to atone for us and Jesus Christ is the only pure, blameless, perfect sacrifice that can atone for our sins. Thank God for mercy for each and every one of us.

The last chapter of Job is all about grace. Job realizes that he cannot justify himself, he really isn't righteous enough, and he repents, receiving God's unmerited favor – grace. And then his friends learn they are in need of that grace as well and they offer sacrifice. And Job discovers that those who receive of God's grace must be gracious and so he has to pray for his friends, forgiving them, showing them grace. And the rest of Job's life is characterized by grace!

Not only did God restore Job's friends,

God restored Job's fortune. Notice again, it was after he prayed for his friends, forgiving them, **"After Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before."** Job 42:10

Everything he had doubled. His friends rallied around him and gave him a piece of silver and a gold ring. He started with 7,000 sheep and now he had 14,000. He started with 3,000 camels, now he has 6,000. He started with 500 oxen and 500 donkeys and now he has 1,000 each.

God longs to bless us if we can handle it and if we will prepare ourselves for it. Remember the series I preached years ago about increasing your capacity for receiving from God? Job increased his capacity by forgiving his friends that had wronged him. How about you? **God restored Job's family.** Job had seven sons and three daughters. Did God double his family? Sure. Now he had 10 children in heaven and 10 children on earth. The bible says his daughters were the fairest in the land. Interesting names he gave them. Jemima means "turtledove" or dove. Keziah means cinnamon or translated perfume and Keren-happuch is another name for "horn-of-paint" or eye-makeup. (Cosmetics carried in a hollow horn.) Each of these represent the beauty of Eastern women in ancient times. Peace like a dove, a sweet fragrance and beauty are all something that Job has experienced in a new way since God restored

him and showed him his mercy and grace.

The really interesting thing is that his three daughters were granted an inheritance along with their brothers which was unheard of at that time. His daughters did not expect an inheritance and according to the law, did not deserve one. So what caused him to give his daughters an unmerited gift, to show them unmerited favor? I think Job blessed them like this because he realized he had been blessed with God's unmerited favor. What did I say a minute ago? The rest of Job's life was characterized by grace. God blessed him, not because he was righteous, but because he trusted God and believed and humbled himself before the Lord. He had received God's grace and now he was being gracious to everyone: his friends and his family. **God restored Job's future.** Finally, the book of Job concludes with these words: **"After this, Job lived a hundred and forty years; he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation. And so he died, old and full of years."**

Tradition says Job lived to be 210. If he was 70 when the trouble came, God doubled his life and he lived another 140 years. He had a time of trial, but set in the time line of 210 years, it probably wasn't all that long. Job had a blessed life.

You may be going through some trials, difficulties, perhaps like no other you've ever encountered on the journey. Can I encourage you to take a lesson from Job. Not every day is going to be a dark day. God still speaks to us from the storm and brings us peace. God still comes to encourage us, to restore to us what has been lost or stolen from us. God still comes to forgive and shower us with his grace.

Job died "full of years." That means he learned to celebrate life, to live it, enjoy it, experience it filled with God's grace. God, let us die, old and full of years.

God has been gracious to us. Let's be gracious to those around us. Let's live in that grace. I think it is the path to a life like Job's—blessed and full of years.