

Hope For The Hard Times Part 11

Life has a way of quickly reducing our best philosophy and ideas to the lowest common denominator. We think we have it all figured out. We have answers to all the questions. We can give advice with the best of them. We make our plans and follow through and success is ours. We look at life from a safe distance and then...without warning...things change. Unexpected trouble comes, suddenly we are a victim. Out of no where we hear, "I want a divorce, I've been having an affair. Mom and Dad, I'm pregnant. Mom and Dad, I'm gay. I'm sorry, but the tumor is malignant. It looks like your Mom has Alzheimers and dementia. I'm sorry but we won't be needing you any longer. I'm sorry to tell you but there has been an accident..."

Is there hope for hard times? Will your values and the priorities of your life carry you through these hard times? This is where the rubber meets the road. What is the basis for your hope in the hard times of your life? What do you know for sure? About life? About God?

I think Job was figuring some of these things out. I want us to look at some of the big lessons from Job. These are the things that were bedrock for Job. Here are ten things Job knew for sure and keep in mind the circumstances Job was in as he affirmed these things.

1. God is still sovereign. "At this Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said: 'Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.' In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing." Job1:20-

22. Job had a proper perspective on life. I came into this world with nothing and I will leave it with nothing. The Lord gives and he takes. He is in control of our lives. God is sovereign, but we know that he loves us and he has ordained good for us. The Bible tells us He has predestined us to be made conformable to the image of Christ. Every good and perfect gift comes from the Father. He delights in giving good gifts to his children. Consequently, we are not frightened by God's sovereignty. Stop and consider the blessings you've received from the Lord. In his mercy he has forgiven you, blessed you, prospered your way. Whatever happens in life, we know that God is working all things for our good because we love him and we are called according to his purpose. As a consequence, we can:

Expect and keep on expecting. Goodness and mercy are following you. Don't go through life

expecting the worst. God's plans for you are to bless and prosper your way. Your expectations should be of God's help and blessing in your life.

Trust and keep on trusting. When things don't always turn out as you had hoped, and there will be days like that, keep on trusting (more on that later). Trust the one that gives. Trust the Sovereign Lord.

Rejoice and keep on rejoicing. There are still plenty of good things and good days, both today and tomorrow. God loves you and God is faithful. Rejoice and that will take you back to expecting good and trusting in God's faithfulness which will cause you to rejoice which will cause you to expect God's best...It becomes a cyclical way of life. Trusting, rejoicing, expecting, trusting...

Job said the Lord gives and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord. Most of us don't think much about blessing the Lord when he is taking away, but think about that for a minute. **Some of what we ought to be thanking the Lord for is the stuff he has taken away!** Things that would have destroyed our walk with God, things that God knew would ultimately harm us, things that would blur our vision of Him, things that would dull our spiritual hearing or harden our heart, things that we would trust in and rely upon instead of the Lord. Thank God he gives and he takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. Thank God that He is sovereign. He is in control and we can trust him.

It was likely by faith Job said this at the beginning. Like most of us, Job couldn't imagine being grateful for what had been taken away, but at the end, Job knew God like never before. His vision was no longer blurred. He had a clear image of God. Blessed be the name of the Lord. The second thing Job learned that was bedrock for him:

2. It's always time to praise the Lord. "May the name of the Lord be praised." Job 1:21.

V20 says Job worshiped. After losing everything, he still knew it was right to worship and praise the Lord, not because of what happened, but in spite of, in the midst of. The Psalmist said to ascribe to the Lord the glory, the honor due his name. How much is that? Have we praised and worshiped enough? Ascribe to him glory, regardless of circumstances. God is still worthy to be praised, regardless of the situation. Praise Him. It will lead you out of defeat and into victory. We worship and praise not because we feel like it or because the circumstances are so perfect...we worship and praise because he is worthy. Whether we are in the lion's den,

pharaoh's dungeon or the king's palace, it is always time to praise the Lord. The third thing Job knew for sure:

3. The best place for faith is in the dark! Job was in the dark all this time. He couldn't figure out what was going on. God seemed silent, no answers and the future looked bleak. There was no sign of deliverance in sight. Job didn't have all the information that we have from chapter 1. He didn't know what Satan was doing or what God was doing, but trust and faith is about what you do when you can't see where – and you don't know why. Faith is what moves you on, even though we see through a glass darkly, Paul said, because we know up ahead, we will see him face to face. Faith says, "I know God is at work somehow, even though I can't see him, even though I don't hear anything, but I know he is here with me."

Job put it this way. **"Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him (trust him)... Indeed, this will turn out for my deliverance." Job 13:15-16**

Some think faith is what keeps trouble from ever coming. I think faith is what carries you through the darkness when trouble has come. Faith like the 3 Hebrew children – we know God is able to deliver us from this fiery furnace, but if not, we still won't bow! Faith says, "I trust God. Bottom line. Period. Bed rock. Somehow, this will turn out for my deliverance." Faith, while in the darkness, will lead you to the light. Another thing Job learned:

4. We aren't here all that long, make it count! "Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He springs up like a flower and withers away; like a fleeting shadow, he does not endure...Man's days are determined; you have decreed the number of his months and have set limits he cannot exceed." Job 14:2,5. Job discovered what all of us finally realize. We weren't made to live here forever. It is a pretty short journey. We were created for better things. Eternity is ahead.

Our existence here is like a flower, a fleeting shadow. Our days have been determined. God knows how many that will be so make the most of your days. Serve God. Love one another. Don't spend your days fighting, whining, complaining because your days are brief enough. They go by so quickly. Spend your days wisely. Do something for God. Do something that will count for eternity. Leave something worthwhile behind.

I realize I have more years behind me than ahead of me in this life. What will I do with the time that is left? Make it count Phil!

And remember: **You can stand anything for a little while. This life will all be over soon enough, but eternity is forever.** The fifth thing Job learned and knew for sure:

5. Write it in stone: “I know my redeemer lives.” “Oh that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll, that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever! I know that my Redeemer lives and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes – I and not another. How my heart yearns within me! Job 19:23-27. What a comfort. My redeemer lives. The one that will deliver me is alive.

By the Holy Spirit Job is pointing to Christ our Redeemer. Everything is going to be all right.

My Redeemer lives. Write this one in stone forever. I have a Redeemer that is alive and victorious and I’m going to be delivered and will live with him forever. He is my Redeemer.

In the Old Testament, the redeemer was the person’s nearest male relative who assumed the responsibility to come to the aid of a family member in distress.

He could reclaim and restore lost property, (e.g., buying back the family farm for a widowed sister in law)

He could buy a relative out of slavery (pay off indebtedness by a Kinsman redeemer)

He could avenge a slain relative by killing the murderer (Kinsman redeemer)

He could defend a relative in a lawsuit

He could marry a relative’s childless widow

The redeemer was a vindicator of one unjustly wronged – a defender of the oppressed – a champion of the suffering – an advocate. He was there to stand with you. He was your deliverer, the one you could count on to be on your side.

Notice Job spoke of him as My Redeemer. It was personal for Job. “My Redeemer”. Job knew that regardless of what happened, he had a kinsman redeemer, one that would stand with him, personally. And Job’s redeemer is our Redeemer, the one that gave his very life to redeem us. He died on Calvary, buried in that borrowed tomb but on Sunday morning he came walking out of the grave, carrying the keys to death, hell and the grave.

Did I mention that I know my redeemer lives?! He is alive and everything changes when you know he is alive! He is my victor and I will stand with him on that day.

Keep in mind Job’s circumstances as he declared this. Remember the ten graves of his

children. It is in the cemetery, in the fiery furnace of testing or loss that we declare by faith, “I know my redeemer lives.” The sixth thing Job learned and knew for sure:

6. God is on my side and He is standing with me. “I know that my Redeemer lives and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.” Job 19:25. Regardless of what is going on around you, God is on your side. Your redeemer is with you and he will stand with you one day upon this earth as the victorious, conquering king.

Understand, I am in Christ. If he is standing at the end...then so am I! We may have suffered some staggering blows, we may have been knocked down a few times, but after all is said and done, keep on trusting in him because we will still be standing on that final day, with Him. The seventh thing Job learned and knew for sure:

7. One day, I’ll have a new body. Job said, **“And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God...with my own eyes – I and not another.” Job 19:26-27**

Job knew that old house he was living in was just about gone. His skin was being destroyed by the sores on his body. The skin worms may be referring to what was happening at that moment with his dying, decaying skin, or perhaps he was thinking of death and what was to come for that old body. But he knew this old house doesn’t matter all that much. In fact, Jesus said it was better to enter heaven maimed than to miss heaven and have a healthy, whole body. Don’t worry about those that can destroy the body – fear the one that can throw body and soul into hell – but realize one day we are going to have a brand new body, like his.

Job knew by the Holy Spirit that there was a life after this, that we will have a new body, that we will know one another and be known. That even though this body wears out or is destroyed, “Yet in my flesh I will see God.” Don’t doubt it. One of these days we will be like him and we will see him face to face.

There is a resurrection day coming. Look at Job 14:14-15. **“If a man dies, will he live again?... I will wait for my renewal to come.”** Listen... **“You will call and I will answer you. You will long for the creature your hands have made.” Job 14:14-15** Many of our loved ones have heard that call. There is no reason for us to be afraid of death. It is his call.

That passage tells us God is longing for us, his creation. Just wait. One of these days he will call and we will answer. And on that day, we will stand together forever. What a great day that is going to be. The eighth thing Job learned and knew for sure:

8. I will see God. Here is another bedrock affirmation for Job. I will see God. **“I, and not another.” 19:27. “I myself will see him, with my own eyes.”** Not just seeing some ethereal spirit or discerning a bright light up ahead. Not just a feeling of love or warmth. I myself will see God. Count on it. This is real. God is real and we are going to see him. People think heaven is some kind of dream but the songwriter said, “Life is a dream, but heaven’s a reality.” Job said, **“How my heart yearns within me.”** Job knew there was something more, something ahead. He was longing to see the one who had redeemed him. The ninth thing Job knew for sure:

9. The testing is not to trouble me but to perfect me. “But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold.” Job 23:10. Testing comes with life. And we have to be careful because it can take our eyes off of the Lord if we aren’t careful. We need to remember God’s purposes are being carried out in a multitude of ways. He has promised to mature and perfect those things that are essential in our life. Testing yields a purifying effect upon our heart and life, our spirit, our values, our priorities, our perspective, our hope, our faith. We can trust him because he knows the way we take. He is leading us to maturity so we aren’t disillusioned by testing or trials. That’s why we’ve reaffirmed all the bedrock things we know for sure. We are committed to the truth we know, the truth we have discovered and experienced: God is sovereign, giving and taking as required to make us complete.

Keep praising the Lord. He is still worthy to be praised.

The best place for faith is in the dark. It will lead you to the light.

We aren’t here all that long. Make it count and cheer up. It will all pass soon enough.

My redeemer lives: Deliverance is on the way.

My redeemer is on my side. We will still be standing at the end of this journey.

I’m going to have a brand new body.

I’m going to see God.

When testing time comes, I remember these things and so I will trust him and praise him. Know as Job did, the testing and trouble won’t last forever. The redeemer lives and will help you through the test and trial. And heaven is just ahead and it is real.

Job said “When God has tested me, I will come forth as gold: refined, pure, 100% solid gold, no impurities. We will be like pure gold and with a pure heart. And what happens to the

pure in heart? Jesus said “Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God.” Matthew 5:8

10. We will see God. Job said, “**My ears had heard of you (before all the testing) but now my eyes have seen you.**” **Job 42:5** It’s been worth it all. I’ve seen Jesus like I’ve never seen him before. Those whose hearts have been made pure through the fire, they see God.

Trust him through the trials because he will be faithful. Heaven is just ahead. But in the meantime, Jesus is here with us. Trust him and you will see him and not just hear about him.

You will see him, your Redeemer who lives. It will be worth it all.

You’ve been weary in the struggle. The battle doesn’t seem to be letting up, but it’s only for awhile and then he will call us and we will answer. You are going to come through this as pure gold. You will still be standing – and standing right next to Jesus. Don’t give up, unless you are giving up to Jesus. Surrender to him. Trust him. Your Redeemer lives. It’s going to be all right. Job came through it and you will too. There is hope for these hard times. Hold on to the one you know. All hell has broken loose against you, but all of heaven is standing with you and in the end, you will still be standing, with the Lord standing right along side of you.