

ADVENT 3 – 2007

Job 1: 1 - 22

'I am not a patient person!' I have heard that kind of statement many, many times through the years. Sometimes it is said almost like a confession. Sometimes people say it, irritated with themselves that they are impatient. I suppose sometimes it is offered as a sort of excuse, too.

There is one kind of patience that is vital, however. That is patience with God and the way God lets things happen in our lives. And in all likelihood other matters requiring patience fit in with patience with God's ways.

So, saying 'I am not very patient' might be saying more than we suspect. Not being patient suggests that our faith in God is a bit weak, a little immature at time.

Patience Is a Fruit of Faith in God's Full, Free Redemption.

Advent is supposed to encourage, promote, patience, patient waiting for God's coming to give us eternal salvation. Satan and sin, of course, are completely against that kind of patience because it is connected to faith, to trust, reliance on God's salvation. If Satan or our sinfulness can break our patience with God, they will have broken our faith in God's promise of salvation in Christ Jesus, our Redeemer.

When modern man asks the question, 'Why do bad things happen to good people?', they suggest only the possibility that there is no God nor that there is something wrong with God, either that God is unjust or that God is not almighty and therefore cannot prevent these bad things from happening. That reasoning is ungodly. It is a fruit of unbelief. It is wicked.

Satan's goal is always to drive a wedge between God and people in order to destroy the people. Many, many times the name Satan appears in these first two chapters of Job. 'Satan' means 'adversary, enemy'. He is God's enemy and he is humanity's enemy.

First, we see Satan accuse Job to God. God 'thinks the world' of Job. God says Job is a true servant of His, truly righteous and upright because Job reverently trusts in and loves the LORD.

Satan accuses Job of being a self-righteous hypocrite. Satan says, "Does Job fear (reverently trust and love) God for nothing?" 'For nothing' is one word in Hebrew. It is our word 'grace'. Does Job trust God by grace? It is a rhetorical question to which Satan assumes the answer; No! Satan is saying that Job does not believe by grace. Job acts righteously only to get God's rewards of wealth and the good life. Take away the wealth and the good life, and Satan says, "I swear Job will curse You to Your face, God!"

This is an attack on salvation by God's free grace. Do not forget the reality of Satan in this world. On the other hand, note that Satan cannot go beyond what God permits.

Satan loves, delights, enjoys doing what he did to Job. Poor Job does not know what is going on. He certainly does not know why it is happening. We do, because God reveals it to us in Job, the Book.

When God's people undergo bad things it may not even be discipline. It surely is intended to purify our faith even more so that it can better produce the fruit of patience. It might even be another chance to prove the devil wrong. Let us remember that when we suffer.

All Job's earthly blessings are taken away in a day. If God allowed it, that is what the accuser, the devil, would do to the whole world in a day. All Job's children, all his possessions gone in a day!

And then Job worshipped God. He humbly got on his knees and He praised the greatness and goodness of God. You see, all those blessings were temporary. Do we remember that? Often God lets us have them, some of them, until this earthly life is over, but no longer than that. They can go away a little sooner! We should be grateful for the time God does let us have them. There is no call to turn on God if these temporary things turn out to be a little more temporary than we had expected.

Let us peek a little into Chapter 2. Satan had been proved wrong. But Satan suggested that he was not wrong. If Job thought he was going to die, then he would curse God. God would not let Satan take Job's life, but Job did not know that. Job got real sick. Job thought death was coming fast. He suffered terribly. Job wanted to die. Was that wish hopeless godlessness, a step away from suicide, or was it a godly looking forward to eternal life?

Three friends had arrived. They did not blame God. They blamed Job for what had happened to him. They, too, accused him of hypocrisy. 'Job, you cannot be the good, honest, generous person we all thought you were. You must be getting what you deserve. God must be justly punishing you for sins you have committed!'

It is easy but sinful to judge others like that.

Job knew he was a sinner. But he also knew that he had consistently showed his trust and love for his Savior/God by the fruits of his faith, honesty, integrity, generosity, kindness, offering, by word and deed, whatever help and support he could to the weak and the needy. His conscience was clear.

And God tells us that was true. God says Job was honest, upright, a true believer and servant of God. And God sees into the heart and soul of these things!

Job got no support. Even his wife – enduring the same disasters – cries out, "Curse God and die!" We can understand her saying that in her distress and upset; we cannot excuse her. Job did not! Gently, he reminded her of the good things God gave.

What good things? Oh, the greatest good things! Ultimately Job trusted God's great promises connected to the Redeemer. "I know that my Redeemer lives. My sins have been atoned for. I know that after I die I will see my Redeemer with my own eyes, yes, in my flesh, with my body. He will give me eternal life, body and soul."

Oh, Job did complain. He cursed the day of his birth. He did feel God was being unfair to him. He was pushed to the edge. You can read it all in the book. Job was a real human being, struggling, due to a real sinful nature. But he held on. He held on to that one thing, God's free gift of grace, a gift God Himself, as Redeemer, gave to Job, forgiveness, perfect righteousness, eternal life, all by grace. It is like when Jesus said to a paralyzed man before Jesus healed him, "Son, be happy. Your sins are forgiven." Those are permanent, eternal blessings, not temporary.

Christmas celebrates the actual coming of that Redeemer, God in the flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ, to win that forgiveness, righteousness, and life for us. He redeemed us. It is He who is going to come on the Last Day to give Job and you and me and every one of His believers, life, body and soul, forever. And it is to Jesus that our souls will be called in the meantime. Satan was wrong, again. God's grace alone is able to create and maintain faith in God. Wait patiently for your Savior. Amen.