

EPIPHANY 5 – 2009

Job 7: 1 - 7

Dear fellow Christians, of necessity passing through many tribulations and hardships on our way to entering the kingdom of God.

Job suffered terrible loss terribly suddenly. He had been very blessed. The LORD had granted his wife and Job a large, happy family, ten children. And the LORD had granted Job more than enough resources to support that family. He was an honored and respected man, too. But this success, wealth, and respect had not gone to his head. Job firmly believed that all of it was an undeserved gift from the LORD, his God. The respect Job had from his peers certainly was helped by the humble, generous and honest integrity Job showed as a fruit and reflection of his faith and confidence in his Redeemer.

And then, one day, and I mean one day, Job's whole world seemed to collapse. All of his wealth was gone, all his workers dead or carried off, and worst of all, all of his children were killed in a storm, sounds like a tornado. All this hit him like a tornado! Job was stunned.

How could Job know that God was delighted with him? We human beings do not usually get to know God's specific feelings about individual people. Here God Himself pulled back the curtain and let us in on how God thought of Job. God identified Job as a believer in Him and as a man who showed his faith in faultless righteousness. The perfect righteousness credited to Job for the Savior's sake produced righteousness in Job's way of living, too. It is very important that you and I know that this is how God felt about Job.

Now apply this to yourself as a believer in the same Lord and Savior. By faith in Jesus, the LORD our Savior, the same perfect righteousness Jesus earned for all – for Job and for us – is credited to us. That is how God sees us, literally as His holy ones, His saints, and all because of Jesus.

Yet all these terrible things happened to Job. The awfulness of it all tells us nothing about God's feelings toward Job. What it does show us is just how terrible our enemy Satan is. He hated Job. He slandered Job. He called Job a hypocrite, or, at best, a fair weather friend of God's. Satan thoroughly enjoyed himself as he smashed everything Job had. And all this because Satan wanted to prove himself a better reader of a person's character than God is.

Job reacted to all this in an astonishing way. He worshipped God. I have known many a person who reacted to far less tragedy with hot anger against God. Have you harbored some less than kind thoughts toward God when some really hard things happened to you or to your family? Remember Job.

Job said, "The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away." Even for Job, Job felt ultimately the LORD God had to have been involved in what happened to him. And I suppose we can uselessly argue back and forth about this, but on the basis of the truth of God's Word we must remember that the LORD 'thought the world' of Job for Jesus' sake. Job added, though, 'blessed is the Name of the LORD.'

When terrible things hit us like shock waves, on account of Jesus we must remember no matter how it looks or feels, God thinks the world of us. Blessed be the Name of the LORD!

But the story is not over yet! Job got sick, really sick! There are quite a few descriptions of the symptoms scattered throughout the book. No one today yet has come up with a sure diagnosis because the symptoms are so many and so severe. He was covered with open sores, oozing. If they scabbed over at all, they just broke open again. Many of these areas turned black. Even worms, probably maggots, worked in them. He

turned into skin and bones. He suffered from burning fever; horrible breath came from his mouth. The pain was constant. He could not sleep. When he did sleep, he had nightmares. This went on for weeks and months. He was sure he was soon going to die. That is clear from the words I just read to you. He was sure he would never enjoy the little joys of life again. His life was soon to be cut off. Job was sure of it.

Three friends showed up. I suppose it was nice that they came, but they did not help. They offered not an ounce of comfort. They instead tried to figure out why this happened to Job. Their theology was not good. The only thing they could come up with was that Job was being punished by God because of some awful things that Job must have done.

The thing is our own thoughts might do the same thing to ourselves under similar hard times. We start to think that we are being punished for something we did. And it is not hard for us to remember plenty of things we have done that came from our sinful, old nature, not from our new nature created in God's image. Job never said he was sinless, but he certainly and rightly did try to defend himself from their evil accusations of impenitent evil doing. Their accusations were evil and unjust. Later God had Job offer sacrifices of atonement for these cruel slanders of the three friends.

What does this tell us? When even our own consciences and thoughts accuse us of evil, then remember that Savior! Say, 'I have sinned and I hate it that I have. I look only to Jesus who has died and risen again to free me from all the guilt of all my sin.' Remember that God, for Jesus' sake, is delighted with you! Tell Satan to get lost!, to go where he belongs. Tell Satan this for Jesus' sake.

Oh, Job struggled. He not only expected to die, he wanted to die. And sometimes he did say things he should not have said. We can understand, can't we? Let us not judge so quickly and so harshly when we hear someone who is undergoing a hard time say something he/she should not say. But Job held on to his Lord. Satan could take away every earthly thing and even Job's health, within the limits set by God, of course, but Satan could not take away the LORD, the LORD's Word, the LORD's promises of a Redeemer, a Savior, a Life-giver, an eternal, glorious, heavenly life-giver! Job did not throw away these things in unbelief.

You hold on to your Lord and Savior. You try to help one another hold on to Jesus. Do not be like Job's three friends. Satan was wrong about Job; Job was no fair weather friend of God's. Job was a humble, believing, trusting servant of the LORD's. And God even blessed Job with many more years of life and with great earthly blessings, too. Job's faith in his Savior got stronger. If you suffer, know that God is only trying to tie you together to Him by faith. In ALL things God always works for the good of them who love Him. Amen.