

Prayer Transformation Ministries Email Newsletter – Teaching for 6/13/07

A Tale of Two Jobs

Imagine living a life of wealth, abundance, and success—and then suddenly plummeting to the depths of despair. Imagine losing everything, but not knowing why or what has caused your instant demise. Imagine being Job, who in the midst of a violent storm of disaster, has no idea that Satan himself has been given permission to sift and test him.

Then imagine Job's friends showing up, armed with their human wisdom about why his life is such a mess. No one really has any idea what just happened to Job, but he now must endure lengthy dissertations on how much he deserves his newfound pain.

It's no wonder Job found himself a bit defensive! But in his defensiveness, Job crossed a line that brought humbling correction from the God of the Universe. Job's place of wrestling with the truth of his circumstances offers some deep and penetrating lessons for us.

Let's examine this Old Testament character as both *Job the Vindicator* and *Job the Broken*. He is a paradox that perhaps represents all of us at some point in our lives.

Job the Vindicator

In Job 16, Job replies to the accusations of Eliphaz, who accused Job of hypocrisy (15:4-6) for claiming a purity that Job could not possess. In turn, Job accuses Eliphaz of being a lousy comforter (16:1-5), and declares that God is opposing him for no reason. He has wept in his misery until his face is red and his eyes have deep shadows under them (16:15-16). Then Job makes an amazing statement in verse 17: *Yet my hands have been free of violence and my prayer is pure.*

This is *Job the Vindicator*. He is still seeking to vindicate himself before his friends and before God. He states that he is free from violence, and that his prayer is pure. In his estimation, there is no good reason for him to suffer in this way. He is free from any sin that his friends accuse him of—either outward appearances or inward hiddenness.

If we imagine ourselves in Job's place, we might find a little sympathy for Job. If we are honest, we are indeed very much like "*Job the Vindicator.*"

Why Me?

Job was doing the easy and natural thing in the face of struggle. We compare ourselves to ourselves—and then to others. God's own estimate of Job was that *there is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil* (Job 1:8). Naturally Job would hang on those words and find great vindication for himself. Any of us would love to be viewed that way by God! We would certainly feel very justified in claiming our innocence.

Job looked at his life and felt his suffering was undeserved. He longed for an audience with the Lord to plead his cause. Many of us live out of hearts that we would consider "pure." Our lives are free from the "big" sins, and so we believe we are probably OK in the Lord's eyes. We might even quietly see ourselves as better than others, although we'd never confess that out loud. So when difficulties arise or tests come our way, our first response is the proverbial, "Why me?" We are like Job in our assessment of our situation.

Job the Broken

Then there is another Job we find in chapter 42. The attitude of defensiveness is immediately erased when Job is confronted with the reality of God's majesty, power, and sovereignty. A new meekness suddenly overwhelms Job, replacing his demand to stand before God and justify himself. From chapter 38 through 41, God confronts Job with question after question: *Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation (38:4)? Do you know the laws of the universe and how God rules the earth (38:33)?* Job is brought face to face with the glory of God. Job quickly confesses that he spoke things about God that he simply did not understand (42:3).

This is *Job the Broken*, humbled under the mighty hand of God and confessing that his former knowledge of God was the equivalent of being blind. From this place of humility and brokenness, God raised Job up to a place of strategic intercession on behalf of his friends. Rather than punish them with the hot wrath of His anger, the Lord spares them because He agrees to hear Job's prayer. Job is able to pray for his friends because he has walked through his own deep repentance. From this place of brokenness and humility, God restores Job and blesses his life abundantly beyond what he had previously known. Perhaps this blessing came as a result of his brokenness and repentance, and not so much a reward for having endured such suffering.

Chose a Job

We would do well to consider which Job we represent. Do we try to justify ourselves, believing that we are OK and do not deserve any kind of suffering? Do we look at others and feel good about ourselves by comparison? Or do we view ourselves in light of the holiness of God—and then walk in a place of brokenness and humility? Living as a broken Job is the foundation from which God can bless and restore us to His Kingdom purposes.