

## **THE AGONY AND THE ECSTASY – JOB 1-42**

For 4 weeks, we will have First Testament readings from the Book of the Patriarch Job, so I wish to do a sweeping review of his life, and I have borrowed Irving Stone's title of his book concerning Michelangelo, *The Agony and the Ecstasy*.

I Martin Luther wrote that only those who have experienced what it is like to have God's grace hidden can understand the Book of Job.

Nevertheless, he considered Job a book of comfort because we learn from Job that even God's stoutest saints falter in the face of trying adversity.

II The Book of Job is an ancient document that plumbs the depth of the inscrutability of God from the perspective of one who loves Him yet is afflicted.

A This Spirit-inspired book annuls the notion that faith in God protects one from unfavorable circumstances.

- B Job was wealthy! In addition to his wife, 7 sons and 3 daughters, he owned 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen and 500 donkeys: greatest in the East.
- C Job is described as one who was morally and spiritually upright – not sinless – but one who respected God.
- III Job's life became bitter because Satan {which means adversary} petitioned God to test Job by taking his possessions and his children from him stating that Job would surely curse God.
- A The Sabeans [Yemenis] – enemies of the Israelites – stole his oxen and donkeys & murdered his servants
- B Lightning struck slaying his sheep.
- C The Chaldeans robbed him of his camels.
- D Finally, a tornado struck the house where his 10 children were feasting and were killed.
- E But Job confessed in his distress: **Naked I came from my Mother's womb, and naked I shall return. The**

**Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the Name of the Lord.**

IV Thus, Satan returned to God once again saying: **Extend Your hand and strike his bone and his flesh, and he will no doubt curse You to Your face.**

God replied: **He is in your power only spare his life.**

A Satan afflicted Job with a malignant ulcer from the sole of his feet to the top of his head.

B Additionally, Job's wife urged him to curse God in the hope that he would be struck dead but Job would not.

V Perhaps his worst wretchedness came in the form of three "friends" who were certain Job had sinned scandalously but in secret requiring confession and repentance.

A The charge was untrue, but they were relentless in their accusations.

B A fourth friend, Elihu who was much younger, spoke less accusatively but offered no solution.

C These folks exist today who tell us if we only had enough faith, would claim our healing, or if we had

the Holy Spirit, or if we would only speak the word of faith, we would be healed!

VI Job became disfigured with a revolting appearance.

A His breath became exceedingly bad and he became excessively thin with fever and pain night and day.

B As he was continually ill and reviled by his friends, he became depressed and asked: **Why was I born? Why was I not stillborn? Why can I not die?**

C Job was struggling with:

- The seeming absence of God
- The hidden God who in the midst of suffering seems far

VII Job cried out in poignant pain: **Have pity on me, my friends...Why do you pursue me as God does?**

A Job wrongly supposed God had struck him when it was the enemy who had attacked him just as he attacks us.

B Then, Job testified: **I know *that* my redeemer liveth, and he shall stand at the latter *day* upon the earth:**  
<sup>26</sup> **And *though* worms destroy this *body*, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another;** Job 19

VIII As time goes by, Job began to question God's goodness.

A Although retaining his faith in God, he moved toward what we would describe today as nihilism which tends to condemn existence and consider values baseless.

B As C. S. Lewis wrote in *The Problem of Pain*:

**It is humanity – not God who has produced:**

**Racks            slavery            guns            hate crimes**

**Whips            bayonets            bombs            poison**

**Prisons            torture            random acts of violence**

C The why of humanity's inhumanity to humanity is a superior question to why suffering happens to God's people?

- D Human avarice, prejudice, lust for power and greed produce ghettos, poverty, overwork, and inequality of compensation.
- E Even the tyrants, dictators, cruel and sadistic people who triumph over God's people are but agents of the enemy – not of God Almighty.
- IX Jesus taught us to pray: **Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.**
- A If God's perfect will were always done on earth, then we would not need to pray this prayer.
- B What we see in Job is a parade example of the permissive will of God – a will that is beyond our understanding – a mystery unsolved.
- X Subsequently, God began to ask Job questions – questions he could not answer, such as:
- **Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth**
  - **Have you ever commanded the morning and caused the dawn to know its place?**

- **Have you entered the storehouses of the snow?**
- **Can you lead forth a constellation?**
- **Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty?**

XI Chapter 40:6-10 **Then the Lord answered Job out of the storm:...Will you condemn Me that you may be justified?**

XII In Chapter 42, Job said:

**I have declared that which I did not understand.**

**Therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes.**

XIII As soon as Job confessed his sin, God forgave him and restored him and his prosperity.

XIV If we wish to consider injustice at its zenith, we have only to consider the Son of God.

- A Why did Jesus have to suffer as he did?
- B What did He do to deserve being flogged with a whip?
- C What sin caused the thorns to be crushed into His head?
- D What evil did He commit to have nails in His hands?
- E What law did He break? What was His rebellion?

XV We cannot understand how God could have permitted His only Son to suffer such a bloody death in order to save ungrateful creatures like ourselves.

XVI Nevertheless, through the faith given us by the grace of God we believe He did so because of His love for us.

XVII Remember how our Lord Jesus said in the night in which He was betrayed: **John 14:27 – My peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.**

Let us pray the prayer in your pew sheet together:

**O Lord, calm the waves of this heart; calm its tempests. Calm thyself, O my soul, so that the divine can act in thee. Calm thyself, O my soul, so that God is able to repose in thee, so that His peace may cover thee. Yes, Father in Heaven, often have we found that the world cannot give us peace, O but make us feel that Thou art able to give peace; let us know the truth of Thy promise: that the whole world may not be able to take away Thy peace. Through Jesus Christ, my Lord, my Savior. Amen.**

**Søren Kierkegaard (1813—1855)**