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THE BOOK OF JOB *Job 41:1—42:6*

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Still using the image of animals, God now shifts from the behemoth or hippopotamus to the leviathan or crocodile (41:1). The two are the extremes of God's creation. While the hippopotamus is meek and trusting, the crocodile is suspicious and vicious. Symbolically, the crocodile represents evil in the universe.

God now goes to great length and elaborate detail in asking Job to visualize the crocodile. Through a series of questions God reminds Job that the crocodile cannot be caught or used by man for any purpose. He is an incorrigible/uncorrectable animal. Anyone who has tried to defeat him comes away with the warning, ***“Lay thine hand upon him, remember the battle, do no more [if you try to hold him, you will remember and never do it again]” (41:8).***

Now, it is obvious that God wants Job to get a new understanding of evil, because He goes into elaborate detail in describing the crocodile, the symbol of evil. Notice the colorful description. His parts [legs] are powerful and graceful (41:12); his jaws cannot be forced open and his mouth is full of sharp teeth (41:14); the scales on his body are like a coat of armor (41:15-17); his sneezes or snorts throw out bright flashes of light and his eyes shine and sparkle like the coming of daylight (41:18); his breath looks like fire (41:19); the source of his strength is in his powerful neck (41:22); his flesh defies penetration (41:23); and he has a heart of stone (41:24).

This an awesome description of evil. The unattractive crocodile in its own way is an odd combination of strength, tenacity, gracefulness, and power, but God warns Job, we dare not attempt to capture, tame, trust, or play with a crocodile (41:1-7). We cannot handle a crocodile on our own because we will always come out the loser.

Then to further give color to the picture, God tells Job that to attempt to subdue the crocodile is in vain because swords, spears, darts, javelins, arrows, and slingstones, all devices in Job's day for overcoming a powerful enemy, would be useless and would just cause him to laugh (41:26-29).

But that is not all. God is not through yet, for now He goes on to caution against even making a crocodile is like an angered devil. He makes the deep-water churn

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and boil like a large pot, he churns up the sea or river and makes it seethe like a pot of oil or ointment (41:31), and he leaves a great glowing trail in the water (41:32). What a picture of power and anger! No other animal is quite like the crocodile who attacks without reason and fights without fear. He is indeed a complete symbol of evil. Then the Lord closes out His remarks by saying in picture language that Job would have understood so well, ***“he is king of all the children of pride”*** (41:34).

A man of Job’s wisdom and insight would have gotten the message immediately as a fatal blow had been struck to his pride. He had demanded that God prove that He is just and fair by acting swiftly and surely against evil. But now he realizes that his pride has put him on the other side of evil even though he had not been guilty of moral sin. Now he saw that if God were to act swiftly against evil, he, too, would be a victim of God’s justice.

Once again, we learn from the Job story. Like Job, we tend to classify evil. We label murder or stealing as dreadful evil, but we take a different attitude toward gossip or cheating on our income tax. We would label character assassination as evil but not hesitate to make snide remarks about another person’s looks or manner of dress. Like Job we would rationalize pride as beneficial and our right. And like Job, we become upset if God does not strike out quickly against anything and anyone we regard as evil. We, too, seem to take satisfaction in setting ourselves up to play God.

Although God has not responded directly to Job’s original question, ***“Why do I suffer?”*** He has posed the larger and more important question, ***“Whom do you trust?”*** Job’s righteousness and material wealth had calmed him into a state of spiritual self-sufficiency. And his suffering had pushed him to the brink of blasphemy as he doubted God’s wisdom, power, justice, and love.

So, to help bring him to his senses God spoke to him out of the whirlwind. Question after unanswered question moved Job back to the basics of faith. He began to understand that God alone had the power to create the universe, the wisdom to run it, and the love to care for it. And he began to understand that he can, and must, trust God. God knows what He is doing in permitting evil to exist. And He will act according to His eternal purposes at the right time. Although this means that suffering becomes a part of human existence, God’s grace enables us to handle whatever happens.

Paul, that great apostle to the gentiles, came to understand this clearly when he begged for relief from his ***“thorn in the flesh.”*** The answer from the same God who talked with Job was straightforward and simple as God said, ***“My grace is sufficient for thee”*** (2 Cor. 12:7-9).

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It is decision time for Job. Having confessed his pride, can he now confess his complete trust in God? Can he trust in the person of God without receiving an answer to his **“Why?”** Can he believe in the power of God when Satan remains free to work evil in the world? Can he trust in the promise of God to give him grace for every circumstance, including his suffering? In summary, can Job trust in a God who will give him no promise of immunity from the accidents of nature, from the actions of evil men, and from the attacks of Satan? In other words, can Job trust God and serve Him for no other reason than love?

Next, Job refers to the first question God put to him (38:2), and then he admits that he has confronted **“things too wonderful for me” (42:3)**. God’s ways exceed anything the human mind can imagine! Job no longer feels self-sufficient; he has put himself into the hands of God with complete confidence in His power, wisdom, and love. He has had a life-changing personal encounter with God.

To approach the Lord with fear is one level of faith; to approach Him with wonder is a more glorious level. After this experience Job will never again shy away in fear or parade into God’s presence like a prince before a king. Instead, he will move into the presence of the Lord with awe mingled with anticipation—the essence of wonder. Now, Job has learned to worship as well as trust.

We come now to one of the greatest statements in all the Job story. We have agonized with him as he has wrestled with the **“Why?”** of all that has happened to him. He is the ancient illustration of the question, **“Why do bad things happen to good people?”** We have listened to his description of his faith and belief in God. In this he has not been much different from Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, except his God is a bit more personal than theirs.

But something has happened, and he now makes his stunning confession, **“I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee” (42:5)**. In His earlier words, God had spoken to Job in symbols. Now Job uses symbols of his own as he draws the distinction between **“hearing of the ear”** and the **“seeing of the eye.”**

As we learned earlier, the **“ear”** is used in Scripture to symbolize human reason. It is true that reason is a part of the image of God in us—but only a part. The use of reason is a way in which we discover truth—but only one of the ways. Job admits that before his suffering and before God spoke to him, he had relied solely on reason

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for his understanding of God. As a result, for Job, God had remained at a distance as a hypothetical (supposed) concept.

But now, Job wants God to know that he “*sees*” Him with his eye—the biblical symbol of spiritual insight that floods our beings and changes how we feel and what we do, as well as the way we think. Jesus used the symbol of the eye in the same way when He said, “*The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light*” (Matt. 6:22).

Job is a witness to a transformation when he tells God, “*Now mine eye seeth thee.*” Intellectually, he had felt an earlier flash of insight into the mind and heart of God when he sang, “*For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God*” (19:25-26).

True, these words were the turning point in Job’s spiritual journey through suffering. But his greater experience is reserved for the moment when his faith floods his total being and his relationship with God becomes one of complete trust. Now, with his emotions and will as well as his intellect he can say, “*Though he slay me yet will I trust in him.*”

We have learned that patients who refuse to acknowledge their illness hinder the healing process. Not unlike the reactions of Job, we often heard cries of anger and bitterness followed by reasons for guilt and negotiations with God— “If You will heal me, I will . . .”

Basically, the healing of trust begins, not always with survival, but always with peace. This is the meaning of Job’s confession, “*But now mine eye seeth thee.*” Of course, none of us can see the Person of God or stand in His presence without realizing how weak and sinful we are. We are not surprised, then, when Job bows low and says, “*I abhor myself,*” and repents with dust and ashes on his head (42:6).

But the both the man and the situation have changed. Under the dust and ashes that cover a blackened and scaly bag of bones there is a gleam in his eye.