

A CALL TO FAITHFUL PERSEVERANCE

42 ⁷After Jehovah had spoken these words to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, “My anger burns against you and your two friends, because you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.” ⁸So now take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and offer up a whole burnt offering for yourselves. My servant Job will pray for you—because I accept him—so that I will not deal with you according to your folly. You have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.” ⁹So Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite did what Jehovah told them to do; and Jehovah accepted Job’s prayer.

¹⁰After Job had prayed for his friends, Jehovah released him from his captivity; then Jehovah gave Job twice as much as he had before. ¹¹All his brothers and sisters and his former companions came and ate with him at his house. They sympathized with him and consoled him concerning all the calamity Jehovah had brought upon him, and each one gave him a piece of silver and a gold ring. ¹²Jehovah blessed the latter part of Job’s life more than his earlier years. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand donkeys. ¹³And he also had seven sons and three daughters. ¹⁴He named the first daughter Jemimah, the second Keziah, and the third Keren-Happuch. ¹⁵No women in all the land were more beautiful than Job’s daughters and their father gave them an inheritance with their brothers. ¹⁶After this Job lived one hundred and forty years; he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation. ¹⁷Job died—old and full of years. (Job 42:7-17)

Introduction

Traveling by train across the Korean peninsula from Seoul to the city of Choon Chun, I observed an interesting phenomenon. Frequently the train would enter the dark tunnels cut into the mountainsides and then emerge once again into a beautiful countryside vista beside a flowing river. Although I did not enjoy traveling through the dark tunnels, I just had to wait patiently and soon enough we would emerge again into the midst of a beautiful idyllic mountain scene.

In a similar way, here at the end of the book we find Job emerging from the long dark tunnel of his trial into the peaceful presence of God—receiving both vindication and reward from the LORD.

The message we receive from this passage of Scripture is that those who faithfully persevere in the midst of trial shall finally be vindicated and rewarded by the LORD.

I. Faithfully Persevere in the Midst of Trial, Knowing that the LORD will Honor You

The LORD publicly vindicates Job: in contrast to his three companions, Job is commended for having spoken of God “*what is right*” (42:8.) Although Job has had moments of wavering doubt as to the justice of God, and although he was in

danger of developing a self-righteous attitude that would have caused him to disparage God's righteousness; nevertheless, Job has spoken what is right and, despite his moments of wavering, he has not recanted.

The thing that is right, which Job has spoken of God, is expressed in Job 1:21: *"[Job] said, 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked will I return there. Jehovah gave, and Jehovah has taken away, blessed be the name of Jehovah.'"* The exposition of Job's testimony can be summarized as follows: 1) All the good, the blessing, the benefits we experience are bestowed upon us by the LORD and are subject to His sovereign discretion: *"Jehovah gave, and Jehovah has taken away."* 2) Despite the change in our earthly circumstances, the LORD (Jehovah) ever remains the faithful covenant-keeping God: He is Jehovah—it is significant that Job identifies God by His covenantal name, *"Jehovah."* Note the testimony of Deuteronomy 7:9, *"Know therefore that Jehovah your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments."* 3) It is our moral obligation to honor the LORD and render devotion unto Him as an end in itself, not merely when or because we are the recipients of temporal blessings, or in an effort to induce the LORD to bestow such blessings upon us: despite his trials Job still proclaims, *"blessed be the name of Jehovah."*

In making the testimony he did (as recorded in 1:21,) stated in negative terms, Job refrained from foolishly accusing God of wrongdoing (1:22)—Job refrained from speaking folly, or sinful foolishness. Stated in positive terms, Job has spoken of God what is right—what is true.

In contrast to Job's God-honoring testimony, there was the counsel of his wife: *"Then his wife said to him, 'Are you still maintaining your integrity? Renounce God and die!'"* ¹⁰*But he said to her, 'You are speaking like one of the foolish women. Shall we [only] accept good from the hand of God, and shall we not accept calamity?' In all this Job did not sin with his lips"* (Job 2:9-10.) Her position is self-centered and utilitarian—as opposed to being God-centered and truly pious, or devotional: service is to be rendered unto God, not as an end in itself, not as the supreme purpose of man's existence, but as a means of gaining temporal benefits from God—if God withholds the blessing, one should renounce his service to God, even if it means suffering God's curse. Note that upon hearing her counsel Job charges his wife with speaking folly: *"You are speaking like one of the foolish women."* Note, too, that the counsel given by Job's wife is the same position as that of the wicked and ungodly. Like that of Job's wife, their position is self-centered and utilitarian, as opposed to being God-centered and truly pious, or devotional. *"They say to God, 'Get away from us! We have no desire to know your ways. "Who is the Almighty, that we should serve him? What will we gain by praying to him?"'*" (21:14-15.)

The LORD goes on to charge Job's three companions with folly (42:8.) Whether knowingly or unintentionally, they have given Job counsel that is basically the same as that given by his wife. Throughout the book the three companions have urged Job to confess whatever sin he may have committed, assuring him that by so

doing he will once again receive temporal blessings and benefits from the LORD. They are actually tempting Job to be dishonest and sacrifice his integrity (his devotion to God) by confessing to sin he has not committed in order to receive the restoration of temporal blessings and benefits from the LORD.

The LORD publicly acknowledges Job as *"my servant."* Once in verse 7 and three times in verse 8 the LORD identifies Job with this most honorable title. Note: At the very outset of the book the LORD identified Job as *"my servant"* (1:8; 2:3.) Now, having maintained his integrity and devotion in the midst of the most severe trial, Job has—by the grace of God—demonstrated that he is truly worthy of that title; he truly is "a servant of the LORD." Thus the LORD honors Job by publicly and emphatically declaring that Job is *"my servant."* In New Testament terms, note the promise made by the Lord Jesus: *"If any man would serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant also be. If any man serves me, the Father will honor him"* (Jn. 12:26.)

The LORD makes Job to be a means of blessing to others (42:8-9.) The LORD instructs Job's three companions to present a burnt offering, and informs them that Job will pray for them (42:8.) There is the assurance that Job's prayer on their behalf will be heard, because Job is accepted by the LORD (42:8.) It is a distinct honor to be used by the LORD as a means of bringing blessing to others.

Let us faithfully persevere in the midst of trial, and our whole life through, knowing that the LORD will honor us: *"Jehovah, the God of Israel, declares, ... 'Those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me shall be disdained'"* (1 Sam. 2:30.)

II. Faithfully Persevere in the Midst of Trial, Knowing that the LORD will Bless You

After Job had prayed for his friends, *"the LORD released him from his captivity"* (42:10.) Note that part of true, godly righteousness is mercy, as our Lord Jesus Christ teaches in Matthew 23:23, *"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and integrity. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former."* Job is now called upon to exhibit that attribute.

Job's companions demonstrate a contrite heart when they, without protest, obey the LORD's command for them to bring a burnt offering, and when they unquestioningly accept Job's intercession on their behalf. Now, showing himself to be truly righteous in every sense of the word, Job complies with the LORD's desire that he offer prayer on behalf of his companions who had formerly slandered him (unjustly accusing him of sin) but have now exhibited remorse and repentance. Again, note the admonition and warning imparted by our Lord Jesus Christ, *"If you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father*

will also forgive you. ¹⁵But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins" (Matt. 6:14-15.)

Job's act of mercy in praying for his companions brings about his release from his "*captivity*" (שְׁבוּת), because it proves him to be a truly righteous man in every sense of the term. The LORD's calling upon Job to show mercy towards his former tormenters was the final capstone of his trial, which he now has successfully completed.

Job's act of mercy, his willingness to be a blessing even to those who had formerly offended him, now opens the way for him to receive the abundant blessing of God: "*then Jehovah gave Job twice as much as he had before*" (42:10b.) Note: The LORD displays His justice not by withholding His servants from trial and adversity, but by abundantly blessing them as a reward for faithfully enduring whatever trial the LORD deems fit to impose upon them. "The doubling of Job's estate ... means ... that Jehovah freely and abundantly blessed him. The blessing proves that Jehovah is a life-giving God, not a capricious deity who takes pleasure in the suffering of those who fear him. In his sovereign design he may permit a faithful servant to suffer ill-fortune for a season, but in due time he will bring total healing" (Hartley, p. 540.)

The LORD's blessing also consists in the restored relationship between Job and the community of believers (42:11.) Whereas previously Job had been unjustly and unmercifully abandoned and slandered by the entire community (cp. 19:13-19,) now the entire community (note the repeated use of the word "*all*") is reconciled to him: "*They sympathized with him and consoled him concerning all the calamity Jehovah had brought upon him*" (42:11b.) Job's brethren and acquaintances now become true comforters, providing Job with a compassionate and sympathizing presence; they now heed Job's own counsel as to how to minister to the godly in their affliction. Recall what Job had said early in the book: "*To him who is ready to faint, kindness should be shown by his friend; or else he might forsake the fear of the Almighty*" (6:14.) Note: The fact that the calamity Job suffered was brought upon him by Jehovah, (observe the use of God's covenant name,) emphasizes that this was no capricious act of God or "chance happening." On the contrary, all occurred within the scope of God's covenant faithfulness and served His covenantal purposes.

We are further informed, "*each one gave him a piece of silver and a gold ring*" (42:11c.) Their compassion was not in word only, it was also practical; furthermore, their acts of generosity showed the genuineness of their compassion. Consider the admonition of the Apostle John: "*If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no compassion toward him, how can the love of God be in him? ¹⁸My little children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth*" (1 Jn. 3:17-18.)

We are informed, "*Jehovah blessed the latter part of Job's life more than his earlier [years]*" (42:12.) Just as Job, by steadfastly maintaining his devotion to the LORD even in the midst of the most severe trials, demonstrated himself to be a true servant of the LORD; so the LORD, by lavishing His abundant blessing upon His faithful servant, demonstrates Himself to be the truly righteous God that He is, the God who is faithful to those who keep His covenant.

The LORD's abundant blessing is bestowed upon every part of Job's life: Job receives an abundance of livestock (42:12b;) Job is blessed with an abundance of children (42:13-14;) and Job experiences an abundance of days in which to enjoy his children and his prosperity (42:16-17.)

Let us faithfully persevere in the midst of trial, and our whole life through, knowing that the LORD will surely bestow His blessing upon us:

Jehovah God is a sun and a shield. Jehovah will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from those who walk uprightly. ¹²O Jehovah of hosts, blessed is the man that trusts in you. (Psl. 84:11-12)

III. Faithfully Persevere in the Midst of Trial, By Looking to Jesus

In the person and life of Job we must see a reflection of the Lord Jesus Christ, the one true Servant of the LORD.

In the ultimate sense, it is Jesus who is vindicated and honored for His steadfast devotion to God His Father even under the severest of trials:

... Christ emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men. Being found as a man in appearance, ⁸he humbled himself by becoming obedient unto death, even death on the cross. ⁹Therefore, God exalted him to the highest position and bestowed upon him the name that is above every name; ¹⁰so that before the name Jesus now possesses "every knee should bow"—in heaven and on earth and under the earth—¹¹ "and every tongue confess" that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:7-11)

In the ultimate sense, it is Jesus who alone is worthy and able to make effectual intercession for us: "*he [Christ Jesus] is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them*" (Heb. 7:25.)

If we are to fulfill our calling to be faithful to the Lord our God, we must look to the Lord Jesus Christ for His enabling grace:

... since he himself suffered by being tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted. (Heb.2:18)

... be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. (2 Tim. 2:1)

Conclusion

Those who faithfully persevere in the midst of trial shall be finally vindicated and rewarded by the LORD. Let us faithfully persevere in the midst of the trials we encounter, knowing that 1) LORD will honor us and 2) the LORD will bless us. Let us do so by looking to our Lord Jesus Christ for His sustaining grace.