

JOB SERIES ONE
THE PAWN WHO MOVES UP (DOWN) THE BOARD TO BE KING
DR. ROGER BARRIER
JOB 1:1-12; REVELATION 12:10; JOHN 10:10; EPHESIANS 6; 1 CORINTHIANS 10:13
(Sermon-1582)

We live in troublesome times. From the fall of the World Trade Center Towers to the murderous fall of three innocent nursing professors this week, we live in an age of uncertainty and suffering. Welcome to Job's world.

For the next several Sundays Glenn and I will explore with you the problem of undeserved suffering. This age-old problem has flowed unanswered for many since the dawn of mankind. It is no accident that the first chronologically written book of the Bible lays out some guidelines for solving this universal puzzle.

Life is difficult. Most of us have learned to handle difficult. But, what about when life is unfair? Something makes unfair almost intolerable for us. Our drive for justice overrides our patience in pain.

Eugene Peterson puts "unfair" in perspective: "It is not only that Job suffered that troubles us, it's undeserved suffering. In our growing up years we all disobeyed our parents and were punished for it. When discipline is connected with wrongdoing it has a certain sense of justice to it. When we do wrong we get punished. One of the surprises as we get older, however, is that we discover that there is no real correlation between the amount of wrong we commit and the amount of pain we experience. An even larger surprise is that it is often quite the opposite. We do right and get knocked down. We do the best we are capable of doing and just as we are reaching out to receive our reward we are hit from the blind side and sent reeling."

This is the story of Job! Life was not only difficult, life was absolutely, categorically unfair.

Let's take a moment and OVERVIEW THE BOOK so we will know where we are going.

Job is a man of unparalleled piety and well-deserved prosperity. He is a good and rich man – a fine husband and a faithful father—in wonderful health for a 60-year-old.

Unbeknownst to Job, behind the scenes, God and Satan are locked in a spiritual battle. Job becomes a pawn in the struggle.

In a quick and brutal sweep of calamities, allowed by God, but engineered by Satan, Job is reduced to a twisted mass of brokenness and grief. He is left penniless, homeless, helpless, childless—and healthless.

Three friends arrive with plans to comfort him. First, they don't recognize him, which tells us something of the swelling and sores all over him. Then, at a loss for words, they sit and stare wordlessly for seven days. Unfortunately, when they spoke they switched from their comforting intentions to massive condemnation.

For over thirty chapters in three philosophical cycles (which we will summarize in three sermons), they explain with condemnation that Job's plight is all his fault.

- Eliphaz: "You are suffering because you sinned." His name means, "God is dispenser."
- Bildad: "You won't admit you sinned, so God is sending more suffering." His name means, "Son of Contention."
- Zophar: "Your sin is so bad you even deserve more suffering than this." His name means, "Rough."

Job responds to each: "It is not my fault. I have done nothing wrong." He has flashes of insight mixed with depression, self-condemnation, pain—and great faith.

Then one more "friend," Elihu enters the discussion. His name means, "He is my God." He gives the best diagnosis to Job's plight with two themes: "Sufferings are often God's way of refining the righteous," and, "Your sin is pride. You are really not as good as you think. You must deal with your pride." When Elihu finishes, Job is speechless. Job couldn't see his heart for what it really was. He needed Elihu's evaluation, but he needed God to complete the process of seeing himself from God's perspective.

Beginning in chapter 38 God finally speaks. He asks Job 77 questions about science and life for which Job has no answer. It is as if God said: "Since you can't answer my questions, who are you to question My motives and sovereignty? The issue all along was trust. I wanted to know if you served me for Who I am and not what you received from me?"

In Chapter 42 Job realized that God was there all along through his suffering. Job passed the test. God then used Job to minister to the three "friends" and then restored his possessions.

NOW, LET'S EXAMINE OUR TEXT.

The book opens in Job 1:1-5 with a sparkling resume of a good man. Job is a praying man, trusting man, priestly man, faithful man, family man and godly man.

If this were a stage play the curtains would close at the end of verse 5. That night Job goes to sleep. Without Job's knowledge, another scene is playing out in the heavenlies.

In Job 1:6-12 Satan enters the presence of God and questions Job's integrity and motives for loving and serving God. A bargain is struck between God and Satan to test the real motives of Job's heart. Job is the pawn in a heavenly, behind the scenes struggle.

NOW LET'S EMPHASIZE FOUR APPLICATIONS.

1. We Face An Unseen, God-Hating Enemy Who Would Love To Destroy Us. Fortunately, We Are Not Defenseless.

2. Life Is Not Fair. There Are Trials We Endure That We Do Not Deserve. Mourn And Receive Comfort For Your Hurts And Live On.

3. God Has Plans For Our Lives That He Cannot Reveal. Nothing Is Out Of Control. We Must Trust Him As We Live Our Lives In The Dark.

4. God Provides Us A Hedge Of Protection. So Don't Be Stupid. Stay Inside It.

Many of us are now experiencing something we don't deserve. We didn't ask for it, anticipate it, think it would come. We've done our best, kept our part, maintained our bargain and look at what's happened! It is all right. We've moved onto Job's turf. If nothing else this "something" has prepared us to pay close attention to and learn from the teachings of this book.