

“Hitting Rock Bottom”

Job 3:1-26

Series: Job [#2]

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Theme: **Righteous Believers Can Hit Rock Bottom.**

Introduction

We met Job last week in the first two chapters of this book, we listened to Satan accuse both Job and God of not being what they claimed to be. We saw Job living rightly by faith, in spite of losing all his children, his wealth and reputation, and his wife’s support.

We read in 2:10, “In all this Job did not sin,” and we may think, “Wow! What a man! He is a super man, a super spiritual giant. I could never do that!” This kind of thinking would be wrong on two counts. First, while Job lived out the righteousness of God in exceptional circumstances and with exceptional quality, he was no superman. Secondly, despite what you think, you **can** do what he did, you *can* live righteously in tough times.

Let’s set the scene for chapter three. In 2:11-13 three of Job’s friends arrive to “sympathize with him and to comfort him.” They are shocked by what they see, **12-13 READ.**

“When they lifted up their eyes at a distance and did not recognize him, they raised their voices and wept. And each of them tore his robe and they threw dust over their heads toward the sky. Then they sat down on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights with no one speaking a word to him, for they saw that his pain was very great.”

After 7 long days and 7 long nights the silence was finally broken... broken by Job’s long, loud wail, scream, shriek of pain. As he opens his mouth, he opens his heart and lets us feel the deep anguish he feels. This is the lowest point for Job in the book. He has endured days, and probably weeks, of troubling questions racing through his mind. And now, he has hit “rock bottom.”

This outburst is not an embarrassment to quickly pass over. There is important truth here. We see and learn more about Job the man of faith, and about faith itself. Christopher Ash, in his book “*Out of the Storm,*” writes, “Job 3 is a very important chapter for contemporary Christianity. For there is a version of Christianity around that is shallow, trite, superficial, ‘happy clappy’ (as they say). It is a kind of Christianity that someone has said, ‘would have Jesus singing a chorus at the grave of Lazarus.’ We have all met it: easy triumphalism. We sing of God in one song, that ‘in his presence our problems disappear,’ and in another that ‘my love just keeps on growing.’ Neither was true for Job in chapter 3; and yet he was a real and blameless believer.” [p. 27]

As we see Job “*Hitting Rock Bottom,*” we recognize that “*Righteous Believers Can Hit Rock Bottom;*” that you and I can, may have, and may yet “*Hit Rock Bottom.*” Yes, indeed, this is

a very important chapter.

Job Hit Rock Bottom ...

“Let the day perish on which I was to be born, And the night which said, ‘A boy is conceived.’ May that day be darkness; Let not God above care for it, Nor light shine on it.” (3:3-4)

The first thing to note here is that the writer moves from prose to poetry. Why is this important? All of the Bible is inspired by God and is to be understood in a straightforward, normal, literal fashion. As we do this, we take into account that figures of speech, parables and poetry have their own nature; e.g., “the four corners of the earth” does not mean the earth is a rectangle or square. It is an expression referring to all the earth.

One aspect of Hebrew poetry which we can easily recognize here in chapter 3 is dramatic hyperbole, or poetic overstatement and exaggeration to make a point.

Let’s start by taking an overview look at Job’s despair. “*Job hit rock bottom...*” when he wished he had never been born.

This is a cry out of pain and misery. Have you ever thought that? Job expresses this in an intense series of pictures. “Roll time back and shroud the day I was conceived and the day I was born in total darkness. In fact, remove them from time entirely!” “Let those who devise curses curse that day. Let them rouse the Leviathan, the old mythical sea creature of chaos, so that day would never have been given order, would never have come into being!”

Let’s pause for a few observations. When Job “cursed the day of his birth,” as we read in verse 1, he was not cursing God. His “curse” was the wish that he would have never been born.

Secondly, remember 1:3 tells us that Job was “the greatest of all the men of the east.” He was neither ignorant nor stupid. He knew you can’t turn time back and eliminate a day. This is part of the dramatic poetic hyperbole.

Thirdly, because Job mentions curses and the mythological Leviathan, does not mean he believed in them. When we refer to “*mother nature*,” or ask a child “What did *Santa* bring you for Christmas?”, it doesn’t mean we believe those two “beings” actually exist.

Job is expressing as strongly as he can, “*I wish I had never been born!*”

The 2nd evidence that Job had hit rock bottom, is seen in verse 11,

“Why did I not die at birth, come forth from the womb and expire?”

After this clear statement, Job makes a case in the next 8 verses for how he now thinks it would have been better that if he *had* to be born, that he would have died at birth. “Why did my mother nurse me & my father accept me?” “If I had died at birth, I would be like dead kings and princes, like infants who miscarried—I would be *dead*; I would have been saved from this miserable existence.” “Why couldn’t I have died at birth?”

There is more. He hit rock bottom when he wished to die. He longs for death, but does not entertain suicide. Two times he says, “With all this pain and misery, why does God continue to give me light? Why does the sun rise for me? Why does a new day begin for me? “Life is so difficult, so painful, so hopeless. God, just let me die; *please* let me die!”

Job hit rock bottom when he wished he had never been born; when he wished he had died at birth; when he wished to die.

“Righteous believers can hit rock bottom.”

What Is Going On Here?

Let’s start with some observations from Job. From what he could see and figure out, God was silent and had hedged him in.

“Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, and whom God has hedged in?” (23)

His prayers seemed to bounce back to him; God was silent—there was no comfort or encouragement, let alone any explanation as to why all this was going on. Job maintained his faith in God, but could not understand why God had boxed him into this terrible torture chamber.

Back in chapter 1 Satan complained that God had erected an protective hedge around Job so trouble could not touch him. Here, Job complains that God had hedged him in so he cannot escape his troubles. “If only God would break His silence! If only God would open a door out of all of this!” “Why is God doing this? Why won’t He speak to me? Why won’t He rescue me?”

He screamed in agony with floods of tears.

“For my groaning comes at the sight of my food, and my cries pour out like water.” (24)

Job “*groaned*” at the sight of food. This translation is far too mild. The word was used for the loud cries, wails and shrieks of pain from abused, oppressed workers or slaves. It was also used to express the wail of people devastated by tragedy.

His “*cries*” poured out like a perpetual fountain of tears. Again, the word “*cries*” is far too mild. Turn to the next chapter, **4:10**,

“The roaring of the lion and the voice of the fierce lion, And the teeth of the young lions are broken.” (4:10a)

The word “roaring” is the same word as “*cries*” here in 3:24. Jeremiah and Amos used this word to describe the thundering roar of God (Jeremiah 25:30; Amos 1:2). And then we turn to Psalm 22:1, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Far from my deliverance are the words of my *groaning*.”

Job saw his existence as a long, loud, unending shriek of agony pouring out like a flood, with unending sorrow and tears.

A third answer Job would give you if you asked him “What is going on here?” would have been that his worst nightmare came true.

“For what I fear comes upon me, and what I dread befalls me.” (25)

Job doesn’t give us the specifics of his fears. This most likely refers to fears he had before this tragedy. That doesn’t mean he was preoccupied with fears, but it is common for people to think about “*What if something bad happens.*” Now, with his children, health, wealth and reputation gone, *his worst nightmares have come true.*

Then, we come to one more observation by Job about what was going on in verse 26,

“I am not at ease, nor am I quiet, And I am not at rest, but turmoil comes.”

He was not at ease, not quiet, nor yet at rest, but filled with turmoil. One writer states that each of these four sharp summary statements “stabs like a knife” — “I cannot relax!” “I cannot settle!” “I cannot rest!” “And agitation keeps coming back!”

This is how Job sums up what is going on.

Now lets move to some observations *about* Job. None of us see things with 100% objectivity and accuracy, especially in difficult times; times when we are emotionally, physically and spiritually wrung out and drained dry.

I planned to outline a few observations about “*What Was Going On*” with Job, but let me share just one of them. Job was living in that incredible tension of knowing God and His lovingkindness and not not knowing why these terrible things happened.

It’s okay to ask God “*Why*” questions—God did not judge or discipline Job for asking them. But we also need to realize that God will not answer many of our “*why*” questions. That can be difficult to take—just look at Job! God may ever have told him “*why*” here on earth. And so, while we can ask these questions, and even *need* to ask them, we should be careful not to get hung up on them; be careful to move toward God rather than away from Him when He is silent, when our questions are unanswered, when our misery continues.

Yes, “righteous believers can hit rock bottom.”

Truths To Cling To When You Hit Rock Bottom.

First, recognize that deep, dark long nights do not by definition mean you have sinned, are out of God’s will, or that He has abandoned you. Just as God commended Job as His faithful servant in chapters 1 & 2, so He did at the end of the book in chapter 42. This calamity was not the result of sin.

We can have tough questions about God’s “*silence.*” But when God does not answer our questions, when He does not seem close to us, it does *not* mean that He has abandoned us.

He never abandons any of His children. Sadly, some believers are all too willing to jump in and tell people who are suffering that their situation is the result of sin. Like the disciples in John 9 who asked Jesus, “Who sinned, this man or his parents that he should be born blind?”

While God sometimes disciplines sin in tangible ways here and now, so-called counselors who do not know the other person’s heart, are as much off-base as Job’s friends were. They say, “God seems distant to you because there is some sin in your life you have not dealt with yet.” “This bad thing has happened so God can get your attention,” some have said to families mourning the death of their child.

Whenever I hear anything like this I want to shout, “Knock it off! You don’t know their hearts! You don’t have a clue! You are only inflicting more pain!”

And we know that Job, you, and I are not the only ones who hit rock bottom. Earlier this morning we read *Jeremiah’s* confession of many of the same feelings Job had. King David in Psalm 13 & 22, the pleas of the Sons of Korah in Psalm 44, and the saddest of all the Psalms, Psalm 88, are but a few examples.

In your long, dark nights of anguish, be like Job. Keep seeking and keep clinging to God. Psalm 30:5 tells us “[God’s] favor is for a lifetime; weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning.” Yes, I know, some of those nights are very, very, dark and very, very long. Job knew that too. More importantly, God knows and cares about how you feel. In Isaiah 49 we read, “But Zion said, ‘The LORD has forsaken me, and the Lord has forgotten me.’ [God answers] ‘Can a woman forget her nursing child and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you. Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands ...’” (14-16a).

And so, when you hit rock bottom, cling to the truth that your deep, dark long nights do not by definition mean you have sinned, are out of God’s will, or that He has abandoned you.

Secondly, never let the reality of your present pain blot out the reality of your past and promised future joy. Now, immediately I need to say that this is *not* escapism. It is not escapism from a terrible present. It is not escapism to remembering joyful times in the past or fantasizing about one someday in the future.

Remembering what God is like through what He has done is a constant theme throughout the Scriptures. Moses told the Israelites coming to their land, “watch yourself, that you do not forget the LORD who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery” (Deuteronomy 6:12). Then we have king David’s testimony “Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits” (Psalm 103:2). Remembering God’s goodness to us enables us to keep on trusting and looking forward, looking forward to the reality of promised future joy.

God blessed Job’s “latter days more than his beginning.” Our future blessings or joys are not always “in kind.” God does not restore all our financial, personal, family and health losses with more and better. God *does* show us his goodness all of our days. Jeremiah, who

witnessed so many atrocities, wrote, “This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. The LORD’s lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. ‘The LORD is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘therefore I have hope in Him.’ The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the person who seeks Him.” (Lamentations 3:21-25)

Yes, “Never let the reality of your present pain blot out the reality of your past and promised future joy.”

Thirdly, you may never know why a tragedy struck, but never let that stop you from talking with God and working it through. Because we know God has a plan for us, we can make the mistake of thinking we can and should know the details of His plan, at least those of the past and present. And so we can, like Job, add to our own misery. Sometimes people have given up on themselves and God.

Chapters 4-37 are basically a record of Job and his friends talking to and at each other; and, in Job’s case, also to God. Not everything they said was correct, or even from good and proper motives. On his part, Job kept searching and working to find the way through this nightmare. Because he did this, when God broke His silence and spoke to Job, Job was ready to listen and learn. Then Job found God’s way through, and out of this nightmare. If we do not see this truth in Job, we miss an important lesson God has for us; a critical lesson for us when we hit rock bottom. “You may never know why a tragedy struck, but never let that stop you from talking with God and working it through.”

Conclusion.

Righteous Job hit rock bottom. “*Righteous believers can hit rock bottom.*” As you reflect on these truths now, and apply them to yourself, thank God that He did not keep Job’s suffering a secret, that He gave it to us as part of His truth to help us. Wherever you are at with respect to past or present trials, apply and remember these lessons:

1. Deep, dark long nights do not by definition mean you have sinned, are out of God’s will, or that He has abandoned you.
2. Never let the reality of your present pain blot out the reality of your past and promised future joy.
3. You may never know why a tragedy struck, but never let that stop you from talking with God and working it through.

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