

Champion of Trials
Job 1:1-22
State College Access Church
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Main Idea: God uses trials to make us stronger and proclaim his glory through us.

Introduction

As we come to the close of 2017 and look ahead to a new year, one of the constant themes of life seems to be trials that we face. They come and go just as the days and months, the seasons and the years. How did 2017 treat you? Surely each year is filled with both the good and the bad but each year tends to take on a general sense of good or bad.

For instance, in 2016 I was hospitalized for a good portion of the year. Although there were some good parts to 2016, I look back on it as the year that I was in the hospital. I actually came very close to death and was in a coma for 8 days! But God brought me through! 2017, on the other hand, I view as a great year. Although I have been hospitalized several times and gone through two surgeries, I got to come home and live with my parents. God has been sustaining and encouraging me this year.

When trials come our way, we invariably see them as bad or evil. Of course, no trial is truly welcome and no one wants to go through suffering. Especially in the world, people avoid trials like the plague. Yet as Christians, we treat trials in a completely different light. One such individual not only went through suffering but was never given the 411 on who caused it or why God allowed it.

Job 1:6–12

6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. **7** The LORD said to Satan, “From where have you come?” Satan answered the LORD and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.” **8** And the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?” **9** Then Satan answered the LORD and said, “Does Job fear God for no reason? **10** Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. **11** But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.” **12** And the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand.” So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

I. The Adversary wants to destroy us.

A He complains about our favor and faithfulness.

1 God volunteers Job to prove his faithfulness.

- a In verse 6 we peek into the window of heaven and the curtains are pulled back. We are given information that Job is never given in his entire lifetime.
- b There is a certain day when the sons of God, the Angels and celestial beings who are part of God's divine counsel, come into the presence of God and present themselves to him.
- c While we do not know much about the divine counsel we know that these celestial beings are servants of God who came to be critiqued by him, not coming as his equals. God has no equal!
- d Satan appears for the same reason. God begins the conversation by asking Satan where he's been. Satan responds, "Roaming throughout the earth." Satan does not have a place in heaven.
- e He is confined to the earth alone. There is no comparison between him and God. Perhaps he is admiring his handiwork in destroying God's perfect creation through introducing sin.
- f It is at this juncture that God volunteers Job to Satan, mentioning him by name and by deed. With pleasure, God describes Job as one-of-a-kind, blameless, fearing the Lord and turning from evil.

2 Satan responds to God's inquiry.

- a Satan contends that Job is only faithful to God because of God's favor and protection. He fears God and is faithful to him only for the benefits that He gives him, God's protection and prosperity.
- b Not only does Job benefit from his relationship with God, but God is also selfish in prospering Job. God is selfishly receiving Job's worship and paying him off with favor and prosperity.
- c **Illustration:** There is a game show called "Who Wants to be a Millionaire" that asks people a bunch of questions that can gain them a ladder to wealth. The benefits of being a millionaire are well worth answering the questions to get there. With such great benefits, who wouldn't want to answer a few tough questions?

B He conspires evil against us.

1 Satan challenges God.

- a Satan has lobbied his point that with all of his creature comforts, Job has no reason to defy God. Because God is so good to Job, he makes it impossible to test Job's faithfulness to God.

- b It could be that Satan might even be jealous of Job because he does not enjoy God's favor. He is confined to the earth out of all of God's creation.
 - c Satan challenges God to stretch out his hand and take away all of his favor toward Job. He calls on God to curse Job instead of blessing him.
 - d Satan calls on God to touch everything that Job has, meaning to destroy and take away all of his wealth, possessions, family and even his own health.
 - e Satan is sure that Job would no longer be in God's corner. Job would not even be afraid to curse God to his very face and turn against him because the benefits have dried up.
 - f Satan's premise is that the relationship between God and Job is built on selfishness. God blesses Job so that Job will worship him. Job worships God only because of his wealth and prestige.
 - g **Application:** We must never forget that Satan is the accuser and enemy of the believer. He is the one who comes to steal, kill and destroy. He takes great delight in our failures especially if he was able to sway us in any way. He begrudges every good that God puts in our lives.
- 2 God allows Satan to put Job through trials.
- a When Satan charges that Job would curse God to his face if he took away all of his wealth and creature comforts, God allows Satan to take a swing at Job.
 - b God's divine purpose in allowing this is to show Satan that he is dead wrong about Job, his integrity and character. God is willing to put all of Job's blessings on the line to prove his point.
 - c The only reason God brings up his servant Job in conversation with Satan is that God is pleased with Job, his faithfulness, integrity and character before him.
 - d In this first round between God and Satan, God allows Satan to destroy all that Job has. Every possession and all of his wealth is placed in the devil's hands to do with as he pleases.
 - e Two important truths emerge from this first round. Satan tells God to stretch out his hand against Job, but God will not do that. He only permits Satan to have control over certain parts of Job's life.
 - f The other important truth to realize is that Satan does not have any power of his own. He must be given permission by God. We must never forget that Satan's power is limited completely by God.

- g Satan is limited by God in that he cannot touch Job himself. He can only affect Job's possessions and the things around him. Satan is not only limited in his power but also in his scope.
- h **Application:** Do not give Satan more credit than he deserves. He does not have infinite power and he is not everywhere present. He is completely limited by God in all things. He has no control over your life. He can only do what God allows him to do.

Job 1:13–22

13 Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, **14** and there came a messenger to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, **15** and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you." **16** While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you." **17** While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "The Chaldeans formed three groups and made a raid on the camels and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you." **18** While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, **19** and behold, a great wind came across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead, and I alone have escaped to tell you." **20** Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. **21** And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." **22** In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.

II. We may endure great losses in our trial.

A We suffer personal losses in the battle.

1 Job suffered the loss of his wealth.

- a Satan leaves the presence of the Lord in heaven and goes back down to earth in order to deliver Job's trials. Four disasters will befall Job in a single day.
- b He will suffer the loss of wealth in the first three by several different sources. Then in the last he will suffer his greatest loss of family members.
- c We are told about his children. There is a certain day they have chosen to celebrate by holding a dinner in the oldest brother's house.

- d Job begins to receive report after report from multiple servants, each one getting worse than the last. There is a general crescendo from property to his own family members.
- 2 The first three disasters are described.
- a This first attack was on Job's wealth. When we are introduced to Job we are told about the number of oxen and donkeys he possessed.
 - b A servant escapes to relay the message that the Sabeans stole his oxen while they were plowing and his donkeys while they were eating, also striking down all of his servants with them.
 - c The Sabeans are mentioned several times in Scripture. Isaiah describes a tall people and Joel describes a far away nation (Isaiah 45:14; Joel 3:8). These references may be from different regions. Job mentions the town of Sheba in Job 6:19. They were a tribal people from Sheba in north or south Arabia.
 - d Wealth was measured in property, the amount of animals one possessed. It could also be understood as an attack on God's blessings poured out on Job.
 - e The second attack is on Job's sheep and the shepherds in the fields. The servant who escaped reports that the fire of God fell from heaven on these creatures and shepherds.
 - f While the first catastrophe was caused by human beings, the second one would have been viewed by Job as having been caused by God.
 - g The third attack comes from the Chaldeans as a raid on his camels. They steal the camels from his servants and then kill them with the same brutality as the Sabeans.
 - h The Chaldeans were located in the south of Mesopotamia and are commonly associated with the Babylonians. Once again we see an attack by human beings.
- 3 Job suffered the loss of his family.
- a The story contains key literary structures. We have the repetition of servants delivering reports while others are reporting, as well as the repeated refrain, "And I alone was spared to tell you."
 - b We also have the pattern of a human attack, an attack from God, and another human attack. The last attack will also look like it comes from God.

- c All of the attacks before the last attack work up to the most damaging of all four reports. The story began by mentioning Job's children sharing a meal. Now we will find out their fate.
- d The fourth servant interrupts the third and reports the most devastating blow. The drama is ratcheted up as the word "behold" is used to draw attention to the worst destruction.
- e While Job's loss of property could be regained, losing his children is crippling. A supernatural wind struck the house so that it fell on his children and killed them.
- f The narrator is careful to mention their youth to show that it was not their time to die. The house was destroyed and the life of each of his 10 children was snuffed out in their prime.
- g Job would consider the wind to be controlled by God. While two of the four catastrophes were caused by human beings, two appeared to be caused by God.
- h While we are aware that Satan caused Job's trials, Job is not privy to this information, so he would have understood that God was behind these attacks.

B We walk in victory when we remain faithful.

- 1 Job was steadfast against blaming God.
 - a Job reacted to the news and reports by acknowledging the trial he was facing. He did not ignore it but dealt with it head on. He reacts to losing his children by following the customs of mourning.
 - b Tearing one's robe showed the inner turmoil of the soul and the feeling of being wrenched away from one's loved ones. It was a significant action to either show anger or deep dismay and loss.
 - c Then Job shaved his head and prostrated himself before the Lord to worship him. One of the hardest things to do is to worship God in the midst of our trials when things are not going our way.
 - d Job understood that God is sovereign and even in the midst of losing his wealth and family God was still on the throne. God still deserves his worship.
 - e Job expressed that he came into the world with nothing. When he dies nothing comes with him. He blessed the name of the Lord because God was so good to him no matter his circumstances.
- 2 Job did not sin against God.
 - a The final verse of the chapter informs us that in all that Job said he did not sin against God nor charge him with wrong. Job is unaware of the conversation between God and Satan.

- b It is also important to realize that he is never told the cause of his trials or God's purpose in allowing them to happen to him. His faithfulness and integrity must speak for themselves.
 - c Job does not speak ill of God despite believing that God caused his suffering. God has a higher purpose, and as creator of the universe he has every right to do as he wishes.
 - d Job states that all he has was given by God and if God wishes to take it away that is his prerogative. He does not question God's sovereignty. He does not attempt to put himself in God's place.
 - e He does not lash out in retaliation because of the sufferings he endures. He is brutally honest with God about his situation but maintains faithfulness to God.
 - f No matter what has happened to him Job continues to bless God. He maintains a heart of worship despite the circumstances. The circumstances do not change his worship to God.
- 3 Job goes through more personal trials.
- a Although we do not have the time to cover it in this sermon, the narrator repeats the same pattern for chapter 2. He first introduces us to God and Satan conversing once again about Job.
 - b The only difference is that God reminds Satan that Job maintained his integrity. God points out that Job was incited by Satan against him. Satan frames God for the fire and wind from heaven.
 - c Satan once again asserts that Job's got a good thing going with God and he is holding on to his integrity because although his possessions were taken away, he still has his health.
 - d **Illustration:** It is a common belief that the best thing that we have is our health. Wealth can fade and so can beauty. But our health is a blessing from the Lord that gives us the ability to live and gain wealth and happiness. Without our health we have nothing.
 - e God will allow Satan to take away Job's health. But only God has the power of life and death in his hand. Satan afflicts Job with sores all over his body. Job still maintains his faithfulness to God.
 - f Even his own wife suggests that such suffering gives him license to curse God and die. But Job tells her that she sounds more like the foolish women than a wise woman.
 - g Job asks if one can accept good from God and not bad. He still accepts the losses because God is sovereign. This is why he did not sin with his reaction and speech.

III. Trials strengthen our faith and character.

A Trials have different sources.

- 1 Satan can be the source of our trials.
 - a While we have been looking at the trial Job suffered today, as we head into the new year it is important to realize several important truths about trials.
 - b Christians approach trials completely differently than the world. Trials are part of our walk with God and growth. As we are being conformed to Jesus' image, we suffer as he did in our lives.
 - c The Bible teaches us that Satan is the accuser of the brethren. He is the adversary ready to steal, kill and destroy. Jesus calls him the liar from the beginning and the father of lies.
 - d He will do everything in his power to attempt to destroy our relationship with God. Satan was banking on Job giving up on God and becoming unfaithful to God.
 - e We are in a constant battle with the forces of darkness. Satan is only one entity and he cannot attack all of us at once. But demons and other forces of darkness help him in his quest.
 - f **Application:** The only way we become victorious is when we use the authority given to us by God against Satan. When we don't give in to temptations and maintain a close relationship with God we minimize his effectiveness. Remaining faithful to God is the key to defeating the devil in our trials.
- 2 Others and ourselves can be the source of our trials.
 - a The book of James teaches that our own desires can be the source of our trials (James 1:14-15). Our desires lead us into temptation. Our first desire must be for Jesus and his plan for our life.
 - b Beyond evil desires or even desires that compete with God's desires for us, we can also make decisions that put us in awkward situations.
 - c Ungodly and unwise decisions can cause trials. These trials are not the result of some evil super villain like the devil but rather our own decisions that have put us in a trial.
 - d It is also possible that we face trials because of others. The New Testament teaches us to be at peace with everyone as much as it is possible with us.
 - e But it is possible that others do not seek peace with us. They may cause us trials by accident or by design. Scripture tells us to seek peace but if they are unwilling we cannot change their heart.

- f **Application:** We must be responsible and mature enough to recognize when we are the cause of our own trials. We must figure out if the trial happened because of wrong desires or decisions. The source can be from evil or immaturity. Turning to the Bible and wise Christian mentors can help minimize these types of trials.
 - 3 God is never the source of our trials.
 - a James 1:13 teaches that God is never the source of our temptation. The word for temptation is also the word used for trial. However, God can take our trials and work everything together for our good.
 - b While he does not initiate trials he can use them for his purposes. One lesson he teaches us is to turn to him in our suffering. When we surrender to God he takes on our case.
- B** Trials have different purposes.
- 1 Trials build character and faith.
 - a Character chains throughout the New Testament show how God uses adversity to strengthen Christian character and faith.
 - b James 1:2-4 starts with the testing of our faith and the process ends with the full effect of endurance producing maturity and the lack of nothing.
 - c Romans 5:3-5 begin with rejoicing in our sufferings with the reason that our sufferings produce endurance which produces character which produces hope that does not disappoint because of God's love.
 - d Peter also encourages Christian character in 2 Peter 1:5-7. His character chain begins with supplementing faith with virtue only way through to brotherly affection and love.
 - e Trials are the perfect environment to produce the adversity needed for character and faith to be strengthened. When we trust in him in trials our faith is increased.
 - f God uses those moments to enhance our Christian character and conform us to Jesus. While we do not like or seek suffering and trials, they are beneficial.
 - 2 Trials demonstrate God's glory in us.
 - a God volunteered his servant Job because he was righteous. God was pleased with Job's character and integrity. He knew that Job would maintain his faithfulness.
 - b God receives glory through Job's example and exemplary attitude and faith in the midst of his trials. Even as the suffering became worse Job maintained his faithfulness to God.

- c He did not do it for the reward. He did it because he loved God and wanted to serve him, even when it seemed God was taking all of his blessings away.
- d In John 9, there was a man who was born blind. The disciples gather that either he sinned in the womb or his parents sinned and this is his punishment.
- e When they asked Jesus which was true, Jesus replied, “Neither of these. This man was born blind for God’s glory.” His suffering served God’s glory when God healed him in front of all the people.
- f Lazarus, when he became sick and died, proved to be another example of God’s glory when Jesus promised in John 11:4 that his sickness would not lead to death and it served God’s glory.

C Trials have limits.

- 1 God limits the duration of suffering.
 - a We know from Job’s story that God limited his suffering. At the end of the book after Job continues to suffer from four friends, Job is restored.
 - b Trials last until we learn the lessons God is showing us through them. Whether we’re learning to surrender to him or to trust in him immediately, God’s purpose in our trials will be fulfilled.
 - c Throughout the Bible we watch those who have gone before us in faith, endure trials that did not last forever. Maintaining faithfulness in the midst of the trial may also bring it to a speedy conclusion.
 - d Trials are learning and growing experiences. As we grow in Christ we will see our trials come to their end. Of course, more may come our way as well, but they will also be limited.
- 2 God limits the amount of suffering.
 - a God limited Job’s suffering. In chapter 1, God only allowed Satan to touch Job’s prosperity and his family. God placed limits so that Job would not be touched.
 - b In chapter 2, God limited Satan from killing Job. While his health was attacked and his wife abandoned him and told him to curse God and die, Job’s life was not taken from him.
 - c It has been said that God will not give us more than we can handle. If God gives us more than we can handle, it is because he wishes for us to turn it over to him. God can handle anything!

- d God is made powerful in our weaknesses. He tells this to Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:9. Paul, and we, must learn that God's grace is more than sufficient for us.

2 Corinthians 12:9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

- e We should view our trials and suffering as light and momentary trouble that is preparing us for heaven (2 Corinthians 4:17). While it seems to be a burden at the time it is part of our inheritance.

2 Corinthians 4:17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,

- f It's all about our attitude when we must face trials. It is not that God cannot remove these trials, but that he walks with us through them.

Conclusion

We have much to learn from Job and others who have suffered trials in the Bible. They teach us Christians how to face suffering, trials and persecution that will come. Our attitude encourages us when we face our trials. We know that God walks with us through trials. He can use them for our good.

Altar Call for Unbelievers: The world pities those who go through trials and suffering. But the greatest news of all is that you don't have to go through them alone. Jesus wants to walk through them with you. He wants you to put your hand in his. Today is the day before the new year starts that you can invite him into your heart and life. There is nothing like starting the new year and the rest of your life with Jesus! (Ask for a show of hands and pray for new believers. Invite them to the altar for further prayer)

Altar Call for Believers: Some of you may think that you have to face trials on your own. You are carrying the world on your shoulders. God did not design you to go through these things alone. Jesus is calling you to surrender to him. He has been waiting for you to get to the end of your own resources so that you would turn to him. There are people at this altar who want to help and pray for you. Would you come?