

The Lesson of Job



You and Your Household (Part 3)
by Derek Prince

In my previous talks I've shared with you how much God cares for families. One scripture we looked at was that beautiful prayer of Paul in Ephesians 3:14-15:

> "For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name."

You see, God is the Father behind all fathers. And every fatherhood, every family derives its name, its sanctity, its authority from the Fatherhood of God Himself. God cares for families.

The family has been instituted by God Himself. Its prototype is in heaven, not on earth. On earth, it is the projection and expression of the Fatherhood of God Himself.

Consequently, God desires to preserve the integrity and well-being of every family. Conversely, let me say, the family is one of Satan's primary objects of attack. As much as God loves and cares for the family, so much Satan hates and seeks to destroy the family. For this reason, the salvation which God offers to humanity is a household salvation. This is summed up in that beautiful verse in Acts 16:31, the answer to the Philippian jailer's question, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul and Silas replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." That was God's addition. The jailer asked for individual salvation. God promised household salvation.

The scriptural key to this household salvation is the father. If the father faithfully fulfills his God-given responsibility, then he has the privilege of leading his whole family into God's salvation.

In our previous studies this week we've looked at the example of four men who did just this: the Philippian jailer, Noah, Joshua and Abraham. Today we're going to look at the example of another man of outstanding excellence and integrity: Job. The experience of Job as a father was very different from the other men we've looked at, and there are special and important lessons for us to learn from it.

First of all let's look at the Scripture's estimate of Job's character, in the first verse of Job. Job 1:1:

> "In the land of Uz there lived man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil."

You couldn't say more for a man's character than that. He was blameless, upright, he feared God and shunned evil. This was not just a human estimate of Job, this was the Lord's own estimate of Job. A little further on in that chapter, Job 1:8 we read a conversation between the Lord and Satan.

> "Then the Lord said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.'"

I've often thought that there was probably only one man on earth at that time about whom the Lord could brag to the devil, and that man was Job. And with that tremendous honor we'll see in this book, there went tremendous challenges, tremendous responsibilities. One of the way in which Job's character and its perfection was manifested was his concern for his children. He was a real intercessory father to his children. We read this in Job 1:2, 4-5.

> "He had seven sons and three daughters, His sons used to take turns holding feasts in their homes, and they would invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would send and have them purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, 'Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.' This was Job's regular custom."

Well, that practice of offering a burnt offering and ceremonially purifying his children, corresponds to what we would call today, regular parental intercession on behalf of each one of his children. So Job was totally faithful in this responsibility. Nevertheless, disaster overtook Job's children. We cannot get away from this fact. In spite of the excellence of his character and his faithfulness in interceeding for his sons and his daughters, disaster overtook all his children. This is described in Job 1:18-19.

> "While he [the messenger] was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, 'Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!'"

So you see, Job's entire houehold, that is all his children, not his wife, but all his children, were wiped out at one terrible blow. One terrible catastophe carried them all away in death. Naturally we will find ourselves asking two questions. The first, had Job failed? My answer is no, he had not. The second, had God failed? My answer again is no. Neither God nor Job had failed. Job had done all that he could do as a father for his children and we believe that God is faithful. And yet this terrible disaster came.

What's the explanation? To understand the lesson of Job we have to look right on to the end of his story. This is what it says in the New Testament. There's a commentary on the story of Job in the epistle of James 5:11, and this is what the commentary is and it's very important.

> "...You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful."

"...You've seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings": that's what James says. But the word translated "outcome" is actually the literal Greek word for "the end." "You've seen the end of what the Lord did." And it's very important to remember that we cannot judge a person's life, we cannot judge a situation until we've seen the end. And we're particularly directed in the story of Job to look at the end that the Lord produced. I sometimes say to people when they are worried and concerned about some person that they have been praying for, maybe a child of theirs, and things seem to be going wrong, I always say, "Remember the last chapter in that book hasn't been written yet." And what James is saying is, "Look at the last chapter of the book of Job before you try to judge the story."

So we will look at the last chapter now of the book of Job, Job 42:10, 12-13, and something very wonderful emerges out of a careful analysis of what is written there.

> "After Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before. [Notice that, twice as much.] The Lord blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys. [Before the disaster, the figures are given- he had 7

> thousand sheep, 3 thousand camels, 500 yoke of oxen and 500 donkeys. But when the Lord restored he gave him double. Double the number of sheep, double the number of camels, double the number of oxen and donkeys. What did He do about Job's children. This is very interesting.] And he also had seven sons and three daughters."

How many did he have before, seven sons and three daughters. So he got double of everything except sons and daughters. And yet to everybody, sons and daughters are much more important than sheep and camels and oxen and donkeys. Why did the Lord only give him back the same number? Now I will give you my answer, and it is one that really excites me. I believe Job did get double the number of sons and daughters. But he only got the same number on earth, because the ones that he'd prayed for so faithfully, all those years, had gone ahead. They weren't lost. See how important it is to study the end of Lord and to take all the figures and read them carefully. I am sure that's there because God wants to make us think, why did he only give Job back seven sons and three daughters? Why didn't He double them? Doubling them would have been an acknowledgement that the first were lost. Not doubling was His way of assuring Job, "It's all right. I've taken care of the sons and the daughters that you have prayed for all those years. They're with Me. One day you'll be restored to them or they'll be restored to you. But in the mean while, I'm giving you back another set for you to enjoy while you are on earth."

So you see, Job's faithfulness was rewarded. Not exactly the way he would have wished or expected. But in a certain sense, on an even higher level.

And so as I consider this story of Job and come now to the close of this particular study today, I want to suggest three lessons for parents from Job. First, teach the way of the Lord. Second, pray for our children. Third, set a godly example. And then no matter what seeming disaster may come, continue to trust God, His infinite mercy, His covenant-keeping faithfulness. Remember, if you are faithful to do those things, you may not see the answers to all your prayers in this life, but God will be just as faithful to you and your children as He was to Job.

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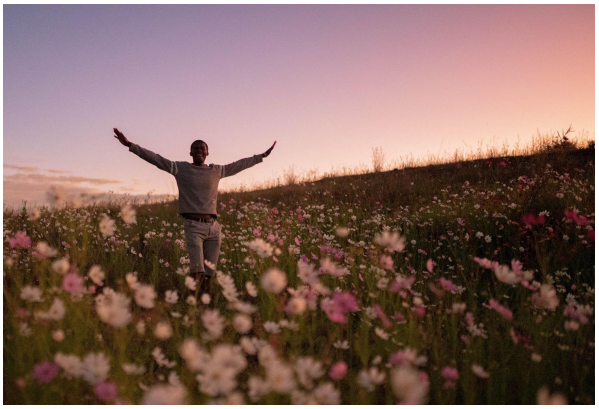
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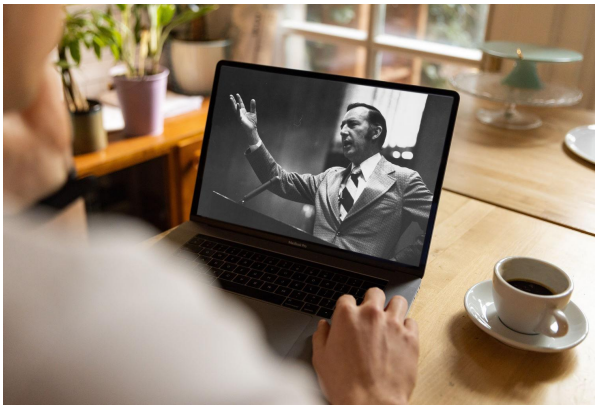
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