

Friends That Stick

Job 42:12-17

January 9, 2005

Introduction - the Power of Vision: In 1965, Walt Disney felt he could really help improve the quality of life in America. Walt Disney took a group of people out to a piece of land in Florida that had no usefulness at all. The land was marshy and muddy and there wasn't anyone who believed that it could be useful for the city of Orlando until Walt Disney shared his vision of what we know today as Walt Disney World. Before one shovel of land was ever turned Walt walked through the acreage and described in vivid detail, as if it was already before his eyes, the various structures, themes, rides, and excitement that the park would bring. As Walt Disney World was under construction, the visionary leader died in 1966 and therefore missed the grand opening of the greatest theme park in the world. **At the dedication of the park someone said, "Isn't it too bad that Walt Disney didn't live to see this?" Mike Vance, creative director of Disney Studios, then replied, "He did see it-that's why it's here."** (Haddon W. Robinson, Hamilton, Massachusetts, Leadership, Spring, 1993, p. 48.)

Walt Disney is a dreamer and innovator. He had a vision to bring 'clean, informative entertainment to people of all ages' and he said that "Whatever success I have had .. I attribute in part to my Congregational upbringing and lifelong habit of prayer." (In an insert accompanying a 1978 record anthology entitled the "Magical Music of Walt Disney,") In another words, the late Walt Disney cited church and prayer as inspirations for his professional success.

Today, we will learn a biblical character, Job, about a vision God gave to his life for him to be a man who is upright and blameless. Through his conversations with his wife, three old friends, a young friend, and that, which were among God, Job and his friends, we're hopeful to learn that true friends stick to each other. Brothers and sisters in Christ should 'speak truths in love' to each other at all times; and before the Lord ready to confess to Him at any time.

(We'll just read verses 12-17 together, but keep your Bible open throughout the sermon as we will constantly come back to this text, the whole chapter 42)

Job 42:12 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. 13 And he also had seven sons and three daughters. 14 The first daughter he named Jemimah, the second Keziah and the third Keren-Happuch. 15 Nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful as Job's daughters, and their father granted them an inheritance along with their brothers. 16 After this, Job lived a hundred and forty years; he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation. 17 And so he died, old and full of years.

(Opening Prayer)

*This is a story with a happy ending, and most people like that. I'm yet to find out any one who likes to watch a movie with sad ending. But the story is quite unusual in that the book of Job tells of a story about an **unusually good man**, who is tested or tried by Satan with God's permission. Job is faced with one catastrophe after another, until he is reduced to nothing from a position of happiness, wealth, and prominence. His wife begs him to curse God and die, but Job refuses. Job's three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, appear to 'comfort' him, but were horrified at his anger at God. The dialogue between Job and his friends fills most part of the book: (1) The Righteousness of God (ch 3-14) (2) the Fate of the wicked (ch 15-21) and (3) Job's sinfulness (ch 22-31). A young friend, the 5th speaker, Elihu, then appears to try to make sense of the situation, and convince him of his error, and feels a need for Job to correct it but with no better results than the old friends. (ch 32-37) Finally, God spoke...and gave the happy ending.*

Job 42: 1 Then Job replied to the LORD: 2 "I know that you can do all things; **no plan of yours can be thwarted.** *Ge 18:14 Is anything too hard for the LORD? Mt 19:26 "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." Lu 18:27 Jesus replied, "What is impossible with men is possible with God."* 28 Peter said to him, "We have left all we had to follow you!" 29 "I tell you the truth," Jesus said to them, "no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God 30 will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life."

3 You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?' Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. *Ps 40:5 Many, O LORD my God, are the wonders you have done. The things you planned for us no one can recount to you; were I to speak and tell of them, they would be too many to declare.* 4 "You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.' 5 My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. 6 Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."

*(The 'debate' between Job and his friends: Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar each elaborates this 1st circle of speeches on the theme of the Righteousness of God, in which they attempt to convince Job of some sin. Job clearly understands their attempts but asserts his innocence after friends has spoken. Then, more pointed by now the friends turn their words to assert the truth and principles of divine judgement regarding the fate of wicked man (ch 15-21) Their assumption was that Job must have been guilty of something when he really was not. Job again protests his innocence. Finally, all masks of pretense now gone, the friends' voice their thoughts about the sinfulness of Job openly; but again Job affirms his innocence. Job had challenged the justice of God, and God had responded that **only He, and not Job, is able to control and destroy the chaotic and evil powers.** Just as God uses all the natural powers in His creative purpose, even so He **allows evil to thrive for a season** but always governs it by His providence to bring about the final destruction of the evil one. Therefore, it was not for Job to challenge God's moral governance of the world. **God knows what He is doing.** Against this address from God, Job's complete repentance is not surprising. It is important to see. However, that **he repented of having challenged God's justice in his speeches.** (42:3) He did not do as his friends wanted and confess that he had done something to deserve his suffering. (Holeman Bible Dictionary)*

Epilogue

7 After the LORD had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz (because he was the foremost of the three friends; their speeches were but the echo of his) the Temanite, "I am angry with you and your two friends, because you **have not spoken of me what is right,** You took in hand an evil cause, in that you condemned him by his outward afflictions, and not comforted him with my mercies. as my servant Job has. (We see the reason why God approves of the sentiments of Job, and condemns those of his friends. For supposing the friends of Job to argue that the righteous are never afflicted without remedy here, nor the wicked prosperous on the whole in this life, which is a wrong representation of God's providence; and Job to argue, on the other hand, that the righteous are sometimes afflicted here, and that without remedy, but shall be rewarded in the life to come; and that the wicked prosper here, but shall be punished hereafter, **right** -literally, "well-grounded," sure and true. Their spirit towards Job was unkindly, and to justify themselves in their unkindness they used false arguments (Job 13:7); (namely, that calamities always prove peculiar guilt); therefore, though it was "for God" they spoke thus falsely, God "reproves" them, as Job said He would (Job 13:10).) 8 So now take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and sacrifice a burnt offering for yourselves. **My servant Job will pray for you,** (Job's intercession for them and the restoration of his former glory shows that not only his suffering was not punishment, but that he was right to refuse to make meaning less confession of sins he did not commit. God restored

Job's fortunes and declared him to be more righteous than his friends.) and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly. (Mt 5:24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. Jas 5:15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Jas 5:16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. 1Jo 5:16 If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that.) You have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has." (Notice that this phrase is repeated here. Job's vindication was complete. God told the friends that they had not spoke what was right, 'as my servant Job has.' Job's words, however harsh, were far better than the hollow defense the friends gave of their strict religion of rewards and punishments. These strict religion of the three friends made them less than human. Man serves God in simple recognition that **God is God** and **Man is not**.) 9 So Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite did what the LORD told them; and the LORD accepted Job's prayer.

10 After Job had prayed for his friends, the LORD made him prosperous again and gave him **twice as much as he had before**. (Isn't our God a generous God? De 30:3 then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes {3 Or <will bring you back from captivity>} and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you. Isa 40:2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.) 11 All his brothers and sisters and everyone who had known him before came and ate with him in his house. They comforted and consoled him over all the trouble the LORD had brought upon him, and each one gave him a piece of silver [a] and a gold ring.

When Crisis Challenge Our Character - Two Perplexing Questions on 'why God allows suffering' when His is all good:(1) Why the Righteous Suffer (why do bad things happen to good people)?(2) Why the Wicked goes unpunished?Even more pointed question: Do we serve God for nothing? Job 1:9 "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan challenged

Job learned that the real benefit of his piety was not his health, wealth and children; it was God himself. And Job now knew he could trust God to do all things right, even if it cost Job 'all he had' – for he still had God! The fault, however, is not with Job but with us. The central question is not why the righteous suffers but why a person should serve God. Jas 5:11 As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

"Friends that Stick" Everyone can identify with some aspect of Job's suffering: areas of family, personal health, and material possessions. It is not simply suffering that bothers us but unjust suffering. We grow up as children understanding that doing wrong = punishment, but as adults we discover that there is no correlation between wrong doing and suffering. Job gives a voice to suffering. He protests... straight to the top. However, Job does not curse God or explain suffering. Job comes to see suffering as a mystery and develops respect for that mystery. But let's look at the book of Job from an entirely new viewpoint, from which we've probably never looked from before... rather than relating to and identifying with Job, consider how you resemble Job's friends, especially in the way that you relate to suffering people. (Chen, another classmate of mine, found a new church home after some time of struggle since her mom only speaks Chinese and her husband, an American only speaks English.

What a friend we have in Jesus!