

Having Only Positive Expectations – Job 13:15-16

Introduction: One day two workmen sat down for lunch, and one guy opened his lunch box, took out a sandwich, unwrapped it and said, *“I can’t believe it! Baloney again. I hate baloney. This is the fourth time this week I’ve had a baloney sandwich!”* The second guy said, *“Well, why don’t you say something to your wife?”* The first guy said, *“What good would that do? I make my own sandwiches.”*

Sometimes the baloney in our lives is there because we put it there with our bad choices, but there are times when we find ourselves suffering and as far as we know, the baloney is not our fault.

Truth is, there’s a lot of bad news out there that is making a lot of people live in fear. We’re afraid of terrorists. We’re afraid of storms. We’re afraid that gas prices will continue to skyrocket. We’re afraid that our jobs are not safe. Fear is gripping our nation like never before, and the fallout is significant. People are literally dying in fear. Perhaps the last days are upon us because Jesus said that in the last days, *“Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world...”* **Luke 21:26 (NIV)**

One reason people are more afraid today is because we know so much more about what’s happening in the world. It used to be that we found out the news either by way of a 30 minute news broadcast at 7:00 pm the evening, or by reading about it in tomorrow’s newspaper. But today, we have 24-hour news channels and internet access where we can instantaneously hear or read about a natural disaster or a bomb attack going on somewhere in the world. That’s the nature of the news—to report on the bad news.

But I’m not here this morning to give you the bad news. I’m charged to tell you the good news. And I’ve got good news for you today: If you’re afraid, if you’re in worried, if you’re lonely or suffering—there is hope—and that hope is found in Jesus Christ.

When I was a Meadowdale, we had a children’s ministry group called HOPE. That stood for *“Happy On Purpose Everyday.”* But today, I want to give you another acronym for HOPE - *“Having Only Positive Expectations.”* Today, I want to show you a man who had this kind of Hope even in the midst of terrible circumstances. His name was Job. He was a wealthy man but in the course of just a few days, he lost everything, including his children. Today, it would be like Bill Gates and Microsoft going completely under in one day. To make matters worse, Satan inflicted a painful skin disease on Job. His body was covered with sores from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet.

Three of Job’s friends found him sitting in an ash heap scraping himself with a piece of pottery. Most of the entire book that bears his name is devoted to the conversations Job had with these three friends. In these middle chapters we learn how Job was feeling toward God and about himself. It is like reading someone’s personal journal.

In today’s passage we’re going to look at two statements Job made. They were made while Job was in a fight for his life and sanity. He was still grieving and suffering miserably. His friends were there, but they told him God was punishing Job for some terrible secret sin in his life. In spite of all that, Job said: *“Though he slay me, yet will*

I hope in him; I will surely defend my ways to his face. Indeed, this will turn out for my deliverance, for no godless man would dare come before him!” Job 13:15-16 (NIV). Job was saying that he was not going to give up hope in God—even if God killed him. No matter what happened in his life, Job’s hope was going to remain in God.

The other statement Job made was this: *“Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He springs up like a flower and withers away; like a fleeting shadow, he does not endure.” Job 14:1-2 (NIV)* Job understood that his body was only temporary. He knew there was more to life than just the body. And in **Job 14:14**, he asked one of the most profound questions in human history: *“If a man dies, will he live again?”* Then in the next few verses, he answered his own question: *“All the days of my hard service I will wait for my renewal to come. You will call and I will answer you; you will long for the creature your hands have made. Surely then you will count my steps but not keep track of my sin. My offenses will be sealed up in a bag; you will cover over my sin.” Job 14:14-17 (NIV)*

Even in his suffering – even in all the undeserved baloney that was going on in his life, Job confessed his belief in the goodness of God. He believed he would meet God and that God would forgive his sins. Today, let’s notice three aspects of his life.

1. Job’s Temptation

Satan’s temptation, worded by Job’s own wife was for Job to *“curse God and die.”* But Job resisted and poured out his heart to God. We can learn two things about how to deal with temptation.

A. It’s OK to Question God, but It’s not OK to Blame Him.

Have you ever met anyone who was just full of questions? When we first came to Meadowdale, the youth were going to YEC. I wanted to go along so I could hang out with the youth and try to get to know them. We didn’t have any sitters, so we had to take Eric and Philip along, and Philip, who was only 9 wanted to ride down to Macon with Steven. When we got there, Steven got out of his truck and brought Philip over to me and said, *“Here Skates, Here’s your son. Boy, he asks a lot of questions!”* I could tell he was worn out!

Well, Job was a man full of questions. In the 19 chapters where Job is recorded to have spoken, he asked 114 questions. Job was constantly asking God what He was doing and why he was suffering. But Job never blamed God for his troubles. We read in **Job 1:22 (NIV)**, *“In all this Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.”* So, we can learn from this that it’s okay to question God, but just know that you might not always get an answer when you expect it. In fact, more times than not, God will probably answer you with some questions of His own. That’s what He did with Job in Chapter 38. The second thing we can learn about temptation is:

B. It’s OK to Complain to God, but It’s not OK to Curse Him

Job didn’t deny his feelings. He cried out to the Lord, but not once did Job curse God. In Job 2, his wife tells him to curse God and die. Job replied, *“Shall we accept good from God and not trouble?” (Job 2:10 NIV)* In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.

When we’re struggling with pain and suffering, we need to be careful what we say and how we say it. We can

sin by the things we say about God or the things we say to God, but we see where Job resisted these temptations. And so can we!

The next part of Job's life I want us to notice is:

2. Job's Testimony

Job was in the fight of his life against Satan's attack. And every Christian is in the same battle. Satan wants to make your life miserable.

I loved to watch the early Rocky movies because the fight scenes were so realistic. I mean it looked like Rocky was really getting pummeled. Almost every time Rocky would get knocked down, he'd get right back up. He took a horrible beating during all those rounds. And by the time the fight was over, he was so bloodied and bruised and beaten, he looked like he could barely stand up. But in the end, Rocky would find a second wind. Instead of taking the beating, He would turn into the aggressor and start dishing out the beating on his opponent. Something would click within him that would give him a renewed sense of energy and stamina, and turn the fight around.

That's a lot like what happened to Job. For 12 chapters Satan pounded, pummeled, and pressed Job. Job had been knocked down numerous times. *Pow!* Job lost his fortune. *Bam!* Job lost his family. *Jab!* Job's wife told him to give up. Another vicious right—Job's friends accused him of great sin. After 12 rounds Job was badly bruised and bleeding. Satan was having his way with old Job.

But then, in the 13th chapter, out of nowhere, Job mounts an attack that will ultimately be the downfall of Satan. Job uppercuts Satan with a blow that landed squarely on Satan's chin, and knocked his for a loop. What was the punch? It was this testimony: "*Though he slay me, yet will I hope in Him!*" **Job 13:5 NIV**. Now old Job wasn't crowned as champ until chapter 42, but from that point on, Satan was beaten.

When you are suffering and trying to find hope, this testimony can make the difference between defeat and victory for you. These are ten words that can change your life, because they change your outlook on life: "*Though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him.*"

As I said last week, one of the devil's tools is discouragement. And He'll try to discourage you in a number of ways, but one of his main ways is through fear: Fear of rejection; fear of death; fear of the unknown – you name it and he'll use it against you. But in a moment of intense pain, Job made a confession that completely threw Satan for a loop. Satan wanted to make Job so miserable Job would curse God. But when Job said, "*even if God kills me, I'm STILL going to hope in Him,*" it knocked the wind out of Satan. Have you come to a place where you can say that? "*Whatever happens—even if I die—I'm not giving up: My HOPE is in God!*" Satan has no defense against that kind of testimony. Finally' let's notice:

3. Job's Trust

Job resisted the temptation to blame God or curse God. Then he asked a question in that everyone thinks about at one time or another.

A. Job's fundamental question: If a man dies shall he live again? (Job 14:14 NIV)

Is there life after death? It's an important question to consider because if Jesus tarries, all of us are going to die. We're like the little boy who was wondering about death so he wrote a letter to God and said, "*Dear God, What is it like when a person dies? Nobody will tell me. I don't want to DO it, I just want to know.*" Your friend, Mike

Like Mike, we all want to know. Everybody has an opinion. Atheists claim death is the end of human existence and after death there is only nothingness. Buddhists claim a person may be reincarnated as another type of animal. It's a fundamental question, because if there IS only one life to live, and this is it, then you should grab all the marbles for yourself. But if there is a life after death, you should find out what it's like and what will happen. This is one of the few questions Job asked, and then gave the immediate answer.

B. Job's faith answer: I will wait for my renewal!

In **Job 14:14-15 (NIV)** he said, "*All the days of my hard service I will wait for my renewal to come. You will call and I will answer you.*" Job's short answer was "*Yes, there is life after death.*" But some theologians aren't as definitive in their answer to this question. I remember in seminary we studied a book called *Systematic Theology* written by Dr. Paul Tillich. When he was writing about the possibility of life after death he wrote: "*Since Eternal Life is Life and not undifferentiated identity and since the Kingdom of God is the universal actualization of love, the element of individualization cannot be eliminated.*" (*Systematic Theology*, p. 414) What??? I wonder if even he could interpret what he said.

I don't think that answer would do if someone who was grieving over the loss of a loved one, asked me about life and death. But I know an answer that will give hope. Jesus said to a grieving Mary and Martha, whose brother had passed away, Jesus said, "*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies.*" **John 11:25 (NIV)**. If a man dies, shall he live again? If you know Jesus as your Lord and Savior the answer is "*Yes!*"

But here's the crux of the matter for us. I'm glad it turned out OK for Job, but what about me? Is there any hope for me? What is God saying to me?

Well, God spoke in days of old and He is still speaking. The question is, are we listening? Here are at least three truths God is saying to us today through the story of Job.

When We're Suffering, We Must Resist the Temptation to Turn Away from God.

When we're at a low point in our life, whether it be when we've lost a job, or some tragic event happens such as a death or catastrophic illness, or we're going through a divorce, it doesn't matter if you're a Christian or not, the temptation that Job faced is still there and very real – it's the temptation to curse God and die. Or there's the temptation to shake your fist in God's face and say, "*God, why are you allowing these terrible things to happen to me?*" That's exactly how Job felt. But like all temptation, you can resist it. Things *will* get better. That's what hope is. Suffering is only temporary. When you think of Job's suffering, don't ever forget what happened later in

his life. God restored all he had lost and more. You've got to believe that in the end things will get better for you, if not in this life, in the next life for sure.

I love the story of the little boy who went to the pet store to pick out a new puppy. He looked down into a box of about a dozen furry puppies all clambering over each other. There was one little puppy looking up at him wagging his tail furiously. The little boy said, *"I want the one with the happy ending!"* When you choose Jesus, you choose the life with the happy ending.

And when you do, you will be able to see beyond the pain, beyond the hurt, beyond the confusion and turmoil and see through the lens of hope to a time when God will restore you. Listen to God's promise in **1 Peter 5:10 NIV**, *"And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast."* Isn't that great? But secondly, God is saying to us:

In Our Darkest Hour It's Important for Us to Confess Our Hope in God

It's not enough to simply *have* hope, it's important to *confess* your hope. That's what Job did. Now I'm not one of those *"name and claim it preachers,"* but there is tremendous power in the spoken word. If you think bad thoughts and confess bad possibilities, that's generally what you'll experience. But whenever you make a good confession based on faith, good things will happen.

I believe the turning point in Job's suffering was when he confessed: *"Though he slay me, yet will I hope in Him."* Maybe you just need to memorize that verse and repeat a few hundred times.

Jesus underscored the power of confession in Matthew 16. Jesus was asking the disciples who He was. They told Him, *"Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah; and still others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets."* But then Jesus said, *"But what about you?"* The only one to answer was Simon Peter. He said, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God."* Jesus said, *"Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah.. I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."* (**Matthew 16:14-19 NIV**) He wasn't talking about building a church on Peter. He was going to build a church on the confession Peter made. Whenever you make a strong confession that Jesus is the Son of the Living God, Satan and all of his demons tremble. Every confession of faith and hope is like a battering ram that slams into the gates of hell. So, go ahead, make a confession of your hope—even if you don't feel it, confess it anyway, and you'll find your hope is strengthened.

You may say, *"It sure is hard to confess my hope when all I feel is pain."* And you are right. But as I've said before, don't waste your troubles! Instead of asking *"Why me?"* we should be asking, *"What is God trying to teach me through this?"* Just believe that God can use your suffering to make you stronger. Job didn't fully understand about the agreement between God and Satan, but he knew he was being tested. Job also knew he was going to pass the test. He was able to look beyond his pain and say, *"But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold."* (**Job 23:10 NIV**). He knew wherein his hope lay. Finally, I believe God

is saying to us:

I Can't Cope with the Troubles in this Life until I'm Ready for the Next Life

Death is evitable, so we need to make preparations for it. Until you're ready to die, you're really not ready to live. I've read about a tombstone in England with these words inscribed on it: *Remember man, as you walk by, As you are now, so once was I. As I am now, you soon will be. Prepare yourself and follow me*

Those are good words, but someone added a note to the tombstone that said: *To follow you I'll not consent until I know which way you went.*

Job believed he would see God after he died. So, he wasn't afraid to think about or talk about it. He confessed he was looking forward to being renewed and seeing his Creator face to face. We need to remember we aren't in the land of the living going to the land of the dying; right now we're in the land of the dying, and we're going to the land of the living. If you have a personal relationship with your Creator, you don't have to fear death.

Conclusion: Job shows us it is possible to have hope even in the midst of pain. It's this hope for the future that gives us with the strength to carry on and not quit. It's not hope in hope that works— it's coming to a place where you say, *"Though he slay me, yet will I hope in Him!"* Have you come to grips with what's going to happen when you die?

Back in the days when doctors made house calls, there was a small town doctor who called on those who were sick. He always had his trusty dog walking by his side. His faithful dog always waited patiently outside the house waiting for his master to finish.

One day the doctor was visiting a man who was suffering from a terminal illness. He said, *"Doc, I'm scared. What can you tell me about death? What's on the other side?"* The doctor said, *"Well, I can't tell you much, but I can show you something that might help you."* The doc got up and opened the door and called his dog. The faithful pet bounded inside leaping gratefully all over his master. The doctor said, *"Sir, my dog has never been in here before. He had no idea what was on the other side of this door. All he knew was that his master was on the other side. I can't tell you much about what's on the other side of death, but I know you're a Christian, so I can assure you that your Master is waiting there. When he calls, just think of it as running into His arms."* The man smiled and said, *"That's good enough for me."*

It was good enough for Job to know that His Creator would *"call and I will answer."* (**Job 14:16 NIV**) And if you know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you can be assured that when He calls you home, you will simply have to answer His call.