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Praise Him with the timbrel and dance. (Psalm 105:4)

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“ In the heavenly Lamb thrice happy I am, And my heart it doth dance at the sound of His name.” Spurgeon

A Giving Fountain

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You love to seek me every day,
And ask me of my ways;
Like those who stand in righteousness,
To magnify my name;
Still you wonder at my silence
As you strike another deal,
Trying to prove my love for you is real.
You fast and pray and agonize,
And labor till you're weak,
Trying to earn enough to buy
The riches that are free.
But I have called you from this darkness
That you might be a light...
A giving fountain flowing in the night.

You labor for tomorrow's bread
And clothing to put on;
You pray to prosper at my hand,
For health and wealth and song;
But I have given all you need
In the providence of love,
If you'll lose your life for the Kingdom from above.

Deal out your loaf of bread
To the hungry and despised;
Reach forth a tender hand
To wipe a tearful eye.
Go and set the captives free,
And give the blind ones light,
Be a giving fountain flowing in the night.

Chorus

Pour out! Pour out your soul
To the stranger and the brother,
And I will be your family-
Your brother, sister, mother;
And I will give you freely
To be a fountain of the light-
A giving fountain flowing in the night.

Scripture References: Isaiah 58:2-12 ; Matt 6:25-34;
Mark 3:31-35; John 4:14; 7:38

Through the Bible in 2011: Part 4

The Faith of Job

Then 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, one who fears God and shuns evil?”

So Satan answered the LORD and said, “Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!”. Job 1:9-11

Job is considered by most conservative analysts to have lived either just before, or during, the patriarchal age. Except for the prolog and the epilog, it is in the form of an epic poem (Hebrew). Ezekiel and James both refer to Job as a literal individual. Ancient tradition suggests that Moses was the one to inscripturate the account. Whatever the specifics, the book of Job is pregnant with instructive truth.

There is incredible insight into the high degree of theological understanding at this early date. (This should not surprise us, since Adam, over two thousand years earlier, knew God perfectly well. But critics often use the high monotheistic statements of the book of Job to deny its early setting.) Job's friends, though miserable comforters, were capable theologians (let us take note!). Their basic understanding of the character and nature of God is fairly sound, especially in light of the almost exclusively pagan idolatry of the time. In addition, the understanding of natural science is amazingly demonstrated in a number of passages (Job 9:9; 26:7, 38:31; et al). But it is Job's perseverance in faith amid great suffering that is the great theme of the book.

In the first chapter we are let in on the back story, of which Job was completely unaware. It was in a dialog between Satan and God that God points out Job as a righteous man. Satan's retorts that Job only serves God for all the "perks" - take away his blessings and he will turn against God, and curse Him. And thus the stage is set for the trying of Job's faith (1Peter 1:6-7).

As Job loses his children and his possessions in a sudden and horrible series of tragedies, he immediately expresses his trust in God as absolute Sovereign. Storms, thieves, and marauding enemies all converge in an extraordinary day of horror; yet Job recognizes

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only the hand of God, and instead of blaming Him, he worships (1:21-22). Then, his entire body is afflicted with festering sores. His wife is pressed beyond forbearance, having lost her children, and now being forced to watch her husband suffer horribly. Her admonition must have pierced Job's heart like a knife: "Curse God and die!" Yet Job maintains his faith, refusing to turn against God.

Enter Job's friends. As mentioned, they were staunch believers in God, with a high view of His holiness. And they were genuinely concerned about Job, and wept with him. Had they held their peace it truly would have been their wisdom (13:5). But their role as *miserable comforters* (16:2) emerges from a fatal error in their fundamental view of man's relationship with God. It is entirely a legal, performance-based standing before God. The Achilles heel of this position is that "*there is no one righteous, no not one*" (Rom 3:10). If a person's only standing before God is performance-based, we are *all* toast. That is the foundation of the gospel, "*knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by the faith of Jesus Christ*" (Gal 2:16). Zophar, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Elihu hadn't yet grasped this. Though they spoke much truth, they did not bring comfort and hope to Job. Those who are called to be counselors in Zion must keep the lesson of Job's friends before them always. There is a tremendous need in the church, today, to develop and articulate a truly *New Covenant* counseling approach, that is neither secular nor legal.

As we continue to watch Job, we see both his honest realism, as well as his absolute unwillingness to accuse God. Job questions, screams, kicks, and curses the day of his own birth. His suffering is deep and excruciating, and he does not try to veil it in a facade of false piety. Under the accusations of his friends he does become a little overly defensive, but there is a line he will not cross. He will not impinge on God's character. He is deeply perplexed as to why God would afflict him, but even in his worst outcries he is struggling *with* God, never turning *from* Him. It should be appalling to us that we are often so prone to question God's goodness at the drop of a hat. There seems to be a severe lack of the reverence for His person that Job exhibited.

All of this aside, it is the incredible proclamations of faith that emerge *through* Job's suffering that make this book such a blessing. We have seen the first: *The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord* (1:21). Then there are these...

Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. (13:15)

Oh, that my words were written!
Oh, that they were inscribed in a book!
That they were engraved on a rock
With an iron pen and lead, forever!
For I know *that* my Redeemer lives,
And He shall stand at last on the earth;
And after my skin is destroyed, this *I know*,
That in my flesh I shall see God,
Whom I shall see for myself,
And my eyes shall behold, and not another.
How my heart yearns within me! (19:23-27)

Look, I go forward, but He is not *there*,
And backward, but I cannot perceive Him;
When He works on the left hand, I cannot behold
Him;
When He turns to the right hand, I cannot see *Him*.
But He knows the way that I take;
When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.
My foot has held fast to His steps;
I have kept His way and not turned aside.
I have not departed from the commandment of His
lips;
I have treasured the words of His mouth
More than my necessary *food*. (23:8-12)

In all of this we must not forget what precipitated Job's testing. Satan made a wager with God; and in utter weakness, and with a thread of faith, Job delivers a conquering blow to the adversary, and God is glorified! Dear believer, your sufferings are not in vain. Every time you endure affliction, even suffering wrongfully (1 Peter 2:19-22), you bear witness to all of creation of God's enduring grace, and He is pleased and glorified.

We have so much more light than Job this side of the cross, and especially this side of Pentecost, yet we see so little evidence that the church, today, truly embraces the convictions of Job. Such convictions are the bedrock of faith that endures. This is the perseverance of the saints. *Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful* (James 5:11).

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