

Let me introduce you to the most troubled, distressed, despairing believer of all time. He was a righteous, God-loving man - yet when sorrow and trouble overwhelmed him, he sounded like an atheist!

At the height of his suffering he said: *"If I had called, and he had answered me; yet would I not believe that he had hearkened unto my voice. For he breaketh me a tempest, and multiplieth my wounds without cause."* (JOB 9:16-17).

You probably have guessed by now - I'm talking about Job! He is the man who lost everything - his family, his wealth, his goodwill, his health, his hope!

I don't think many today can imagine such suffering. All of Job's calamities came suddenly, so that in the midst of fierce sorrow he cursed the day he was born: *"Why died I not from the womb? Why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly?"* (3:11).

"Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul; which long for death, but it cometh not?" (3:20-21).

In Job 9-10 you hear the despairing language of a holy man who could not understand why God was allowing him to suffer so. Even the worst of sinners have not dared to speak so harshly of God's treatment of them.

Job said, *"He will not suffer me to take my breath, but filleth me with bitterness."* (9:18) - meaning, "God doesn't even give me time to breathe between my bitter trials. Life has become nothing but trouble, suffering, grief and pain."

God of the Monsters!

"God, why are you contending with me? Are you going to let me be destroyed? You have poured me out like milk and curdled me like cheese. Life is slipping away so fast, like a swift ship sailing by. Before I die I would like a little joy, instead of all this deep gloom, with one trouble following another."

Finally, in deep despair, Job uttered a very harsh statement - the worst of all his complaints and hopeless words: *"He will laugh at the trial of the innocent."* (9:23).

In so many words Job was saying: "It doesn't pay to be holy or walk uprightly. God treats the wicked and the pure the same way - they both suffer. So why labor to be upright? I was a praying man, loving God with all my heart. I was repentant, raising my children in the fear of the Lord. I was just and honest. I was kind and compassionate, caring for the poor and clothing the naked - and look what happened to me.

"My life is all sorrows, troubles, hardships - nothing else. No one really cares - there is no one able to advise me. I don't have an intercessor!

"Let God take His rod off my back! Let Him stop terrifying me! I'm truly scared. All this is overwhelming! If God is at work, I don't see it."

"Lo, he goeth by and I see him not: he passeth on also, but I perceive him not." (9:11).

Over and over Job cried out, "If I have sin, what is it? Where am I going wrong? How have I grieved God? I don't even know what to say to the Lord anymore. And even if my prayers did get through, I don't think He'd answer.

"Worst of all, I can't shake off one haunting thought: I feel as if through my sufferings and trials, heaven is mocking me. My life is a joke, and God is mocking me in my sorrows!"

I believe Job represents the last-day believer who is undergoing great testing and trial, enduring manifold troubles. I also believe that, in the days just ahead, multitudes of God-fearing, holy believers will go into this same fire - the furnace of Job!

I don't know if we've already entered that time. But I do know we are in a time of trouble beyond all comprehension - a time the likes of which the world has never seen.

Already many wonderful, righteous Christians have lost their jobs or have been out of work for weeks or months. Some have lost nearly everything. Like Job, they have been stripped bare. Many are on the brink of poverty. And many of them are saying that, in all their lifetime, they have never faced such hardship!

Many are suffering in other ways. Marriages are being tested. Families are experiencing great heartache. Trouble is piling upon trouble.

As you look into the future, it may scare you. All you can see is uncertainty, fear, crisis - and your heart cries out, "What am I going to do? Why is all this happening to those of us who have been so faithful to God? Why doesn't God intervene and stop it all?"

Beloved, what happened to Job has happened to this generation! You can see it all around us! We have lost our young ones to drugs, alcohol, sex, rebellion and the insanity of the hour. Our national and personal wealth is vanishing. Our health is declining. We look around and find ourselves on the ash heap of despair!

We Who Love Jesus Are Not Immune to the Hour of Trouble That Is Coming Soon Upon the Earth!

I would be lying if I told you that Christians will see sorrow, trouble, unemployment and depression on all sides - but will themselves remain safe within a cosy cocoon of health and wealth. No! The Bible says God causes the rain to fall on both the just and the unjust (MATT 5:45).

Job was holy - yet he suffered! And just as God brought Job out of his affliction, so He will bring us out as well. But we too will go through the fire!

I hear this same message from pulpits all across the nation. It is being proclaimed by men whom God is raising up as true prophetic voices, and they are preparing His people for what is coming.

Hundreds of ministers are meeting to pray in different cities, and the same confession is heard: "Never have so many been so deeply tested. In the past few months something has been unleashed in the land. Satan has come like a flood, and now every Christian marriage is being powerfully tested - ours included! A flood of trouble, hardship, deep sorrow and suffering has befallen the godly."

You see, Satan was Job's troubler - and he is your troubler right now!

Could it be that he has stood again before God and issued a great accusation against the last-day church? Might he have challenged God, "It is the last hour, true, but You have no true church! You have no spotless bride. They are not wise virgins - in fact, most of them are asleep!"

"Look at them - materialistic, self-centered, grasping for riches and the good life. Listen to their teachers telling them they need not suffer - that all things are theirs for the asking!"

"Take down Your wall of protection, God! Let me put them to the test. You won't even have a holy remnant left! I'll take away their employment. I'll smite them with sorrows. I'll pour out on them a spirit of fear and despondency. I'll flood them with temptations. I'll bring them to poverty. You will see this last, pampered generation fold - they will crumble and quit! There are no Jobs in this church. They are spiritual wimps!"

Beloved, this is why the Scripture says, "*Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.*" (REV 12:12).

Some of you, in the midst of your trial, already have adopted the despairing language of Job. You have searched your heart - and you can find no sin worthy of severe chastisement. You are absolutely unable to figure out why God has allowed you to plunged into the pit of despair!

Your heart cries out, "God, what did I do wrong? If there is sin in me, name it, expose it! I don't understand why this calamity fell on me in a time I loved you most - when my walk was holy, my heart pure, my spirit longing after You! It seems like the closer I drew to You, the deeper I fell into trouble and the more sorrows came!"

We just don't realize how important it is to God that we trust Him through all the floods of trouble that come upon us from hell! You see, the devil can't touch you or test you unless God first lets down the wall and allows it.

I believe that wall is coming down now for all of us - and we're being

tested and tried, as the prophets declared. The Bible says that in these last days God is going to put us through a purifying test.

But this was not the counsel Job heard! While Job was in his deepest despair, he was swamped by critics posing as counselors! They came to him, saying, "I have a word for you from the Lord!"

Behind all their "concerned advise" was this one lie: "Job, all this has come upon you because of sin. God is angry with you! There is some hidden sin in your life - now get it out!"

But God told Job, "They are counselors of vanity. Don't listen to a word they've spoken. It's all foolishness."

I have two warnings - one for those who are suffering, and one for those who aren't but know a dear brother or sister who is.

Maybe you have a Christian friend who's unemployed with no job in sight. Or sudden calamity strikes his home. Or he seems to have problem after problem, popping up out of nowhere.

When you see such a one discouraged by a trial, don't sit there and judge him. Put your arms around him and tell him, "I love you and I care for you!" Weep with him who weeps, grieve with him who grieves! That's the counsel of the Word of God!

It is a wicked thing to misrepresent God to those who are suffering! Don't add to your brother's sorrows! Lift his burden - bear with him - weep with him - share his sorrow. Pray that God will give you His heart of compassion and sympathy - because you might be next!

You who are suffering and are in a furnace of testing - remember that Job was a holy man. He was pure - he had not sinned. God allowed those calamities to fall on him! If someone comes to you and says, "There's hidden sin in your life - repent!", just smile, walk off and forget about it.

I'm not talking about the counsel of praying people who are ordained of God and have the compassion of Jesus Christ. They will come to you with the comforting, encouraging, and edifying Word of God.

Receive that which edifies your soul!

Yet if God is trying to say something to you, keep your heart open. He will show you. Listen to the strivings of the Holy Ghost - and be sure to keep your soul in faith and your hopes alive. Jesus endured great temptations and sufferings - yet He was without sin!

If God does send someone with a word for you, it will confirm what He has already spoken to your heart. And you'll bow down and say, "Thank God! That confirms what is in my heart! You've encouraged me that God has heard me!"

Job Got a Powerful Revelation of God That He Never Could Have Received Had He Not Been Brought So Low!

Your present suffering will end up producing one of two things in you: either an eternal hardness and spirit of unbelief that can't be broken - or a glorious vision of God's control over everything concerning you!

You see, in the midst of all his suffering, Job discovered that despite all his knowledge of God, he really didn't know Him! He confessed, *"I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."* (JOB 42:5-6).

Job was at least seventy years old at this time, and he had been hearing about God all his life. His counselor friends had preached to him of the depths and mysteries of God. They had taught him about the consolations of God, the holiness of God, the character and nature of God, the wrath of God. They spoke of the massiveness of His power, His wisdom, His terror!

Job had spent a lifetime praising God and worshiping at an altar erected to Him. He no doubt had sung of God's might and power. But in a mind-boggling crisis, he did not see God at all! God became a vague theological term - a series of sermons, a dead word, a knowledge that had no life or power. Job had heard with his ears - but the eye of his heart had not seen God!

This is what God had to bring to the surface in Job. You see, God wants more than holy men kneeling at an altar, prostrate before Him, singing and extolling His praises. God wants a believer who can see Him in all he goes through - not a God of the dead letter of the book, but a God who is all-knowing, ever near, one who has everything under control!

Sadly, many Christians today have built their house of faith on the sands of ease and goodness. And when the storms of trial come, they will be blown away.

I see Christians being blown apart already in these last days. They don't understand the testings and trials of the Lord. They believe that, because they've sought after God with all their heart, loved Him and longed after Him, they should be entitled to prosperity and a painless existence - that every prayer should be answered immediately, with no trials at all.

The Bible says, *"Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all."* (PSALM 34:19). God doesn't keep you from afflictions - He delivers you out of them!

That's what God did for Job. In the middle of a whirlwind (which represents trial and affliction), God appeared to Job to show him how to rise above his troubles. And He did this by making Job look into the face of two awesome monsters - the mighty hippopotamus and the serpent-like crocodile:

"Behold now behemoth (hippopotamus)" JOB 40:15

"Canst thou draw out leviathan (crocodile)?" JOB 41:1

Why would God begin His revelation by having Job consider these two incredible, massive, awesome monsters?

First, He poses this problem to Job: Here comes the hippopotamus. What are you going to do - wrestle him down? Sweet-talk him?

"And behold the crocodile. Can you put a rope in his nose? Play with him, tame him like a pet? Bind him in your own power? Are you going to pry open his jaws and

expose his teeth? He has a heart of stone, he has no mercy."

"He is king over all the sons of pride." (41:34, NAS).

This was more than a lecture about the strength and ferociousness of two massive monsters. God was saying something to Job about life's monsters! And He was telling him, "If you try to fight these two monsters, you'll never forget the battle!"

The hippo and crocodile represent the overwhelming, monstrous problems rampaging in Job's life! The hippo tramples down everything in sight. He is a problem too big to handle. How do you wrestle down a hippo? Do you lasso him or bribe him with a bushel of corn? No - you are no match for him. Only the Lord knows how to stop a hippo!

The crocodile represents the demonic teeth that the devil flashes at you. He is ferocious. No person can strip him of his armor using mere human strength. Only God can win the battle!

Job Had His Ears Tuned to God - But His Eyes on the Monsters!

You talk about monsters? Job had them like no one I've ever known. He had no source of income, no loved ones even to mourn with him. This man was at rock bottom.

But God was saying to Job - and to all who will hear - "Face the truth about the monsters in your life. You can't handle them - I'm the only one who can!"

I can imagine the little light suddenly clicking on in Job's head: "These monsters - huge, overwhelming, fearful - are my troubles! And I'll never wrestle them down!"

"I've been sitting on this ash heap trying to figure out why God has permitted these monstrous problems to attack me - and how I can fight them and chase them away. I've forgotten that my God can do everything!"

Scripture says, *"Then Job answered the Lord, and said, I know that Thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of Thine can be thwarted."* (JOB 42:1-2, NAS).

Suddenly Job saw clearly: "God is all-powerful. My life is not out of order. God does have a plan behind all my suffering. He is standing over me, sword in hand, to deliver me at the moment He sees fit. No man or monster can change His mind or affect His plan. My God will have His way! "I can't stand up against the hippo or the crocodile. But I'm going to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord!"

Dear saint, what is your monster? Maybe you've been trying to wrestle him down, but he's tossed you away with a flick of his powerful tail. God is saying to you, "Get your eyes off this monster. You can't harpoon him, you can't fight him - he's too big for you. Let me handle the monsters! They do my bidding. They all yield to My Word and respond to My sword!"

Believe me, I've faced my monsters. Years ago, after walking the streets of New York City - worn out, broken in soul and body - I got mononucleosis. I ended up in the hospital for six weeks and developed a growth in my throat. I couldn't drink or swallow, and sometimes I couldn't even catch my breath.

My weight soon fell to less than 115 pounds. I couldn't travel, and before long all our money quickly dried up. It looked like the end of Teen Challenge. The crocodile was baring his teeth!

So I lay flat on my back in the hospital, a little irritated at God. People came in to visit me, but they only made me nervous. And more than three counselors came in to give me "a word from the Lord" that only depressed me.

But I remember the night I said in desperation, "Lord, I give up, I

can't fight it. It's all yours - I'm just going to trust You. I have to ask just one thing of You. If you want the doors of Teen Challenge to close, that's Your business. But, please, God - get this thing out of my throat!"

Within an hour I coughed up a fleshly growth the size of a large walnut. And in that amount of time, I was well again!

I left the hospital in a day or two and soon got my strength back. And I discovered that while I was gone, Teen Challenge survived. I don't know how the Lord did it - it certainly wasn't through a miraculous \$ 10,000 check. But while I was ill, the staff began to trust the Lord instead of looking to me. And that's what God was trying to accomplish!

Beloved, your troubles are not unforeseen accidents! No matter what you are going through, no matter how deep your hurt, God is right on target and right on time in fighting your monsters!

You may think the devil came in and interrupted God's plan for your life, saying, "Let me at him!" No - that's not the case! It doesn't matter if you did something stupid or careless. If you have repented, the Lord can harness everything meant for evil and turn it around for good.

Don't look back. Don't focus on your past mistakes. Get your eyes off the monsters! He promised to restore to you all the years the cankerworm has eaten. But this word must be more than a sermon to you - it must become your life and hope!

Encourage yourself with these words: "My God can do anything. He has not forgotten me. No one

can change His plans. No matter how bad things look, God has everything under control!"

You may ask, "Am I ever going to get out of this fiery trail? Will there be a happy ending - or will my suffering continue until Jesus comes? Will I ever rejoice again?"

Here is God's answer to you:

"Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." JAM 5:11

"And the Lord returned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before." JOB 42:10

You may never double what you had monetarily. But you will possess something much greater. You will have a true heart-knowledge that God is in control of your life. You'll never again fear the devil. You'll never again fear any adversary or hardship - because you will have come through, seated in high places with Christ Jesus, more than a conqueror!

To me, that's true wealth: more than a conqueror in Christ Jesus!

You may know God by hearing of Him - that's good. That's where faith comes from. But God wants to give you an absolute trust that He has a plan for your life, and that His eternal purpose cannot be thwarted by any demon in hell or any monster that appears in your path. God is going to have His way!

Your God is the God of the monsters!

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