

## 111 Standing firm and winning through

Job couldn't make out what was going on. A host of disasters had come his way (Chapter 1.13-19), to which his reaction, as a man who "was perfect and upright, and one who feared God, and shunned evil" (1.1), was to fall on the ground, and worship, ending with the words "... blessed be the name of the Lord" (1.20).

We read of Job having a "right old moan" (Chapter 3), about all that had happened to him, but still he uttered not a word against the Lord. And then his friends appeared! - Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. These well-meaning men did their best to make sense of Job's experiences, which frankly none of them was able to do: when all was said and done, all that Job was going through seemed to be a case of - "It's just the way things are".

In the midst of all the talk Job speaks of the "months of vanity and wearisome nights" he is experiencing (7.3), which at times we can encounter ourselves, when little makes sense, and nothing seems to be happening to bring about relief and improvement.

The Lord tells us why these dreary months and nights came Job's way. The reason may surprise us - they arose because God had granted His permission. Satan sneered that Job's righteousness in God's sight was a sham - "Doth Job fear God for nought?" (1.9) - "he's only like that because of all the blessings you shower on him!". Satan was confident that Job's faith in the Lord would quickly crumble as soon as the pressure mounted. So the Lord took a risk: He gave Satan permission "to have a go" (1.12).

No wonder Job and his friends were baffled. No wonder Job reached such a state, for he found himself in a prolonged period of inexplicable dreadfulness, with the months filled with endless waffle and argument which in the end got him nowhere.

So why has the Lord told us all this in His Word? What is there within these words which we are to understand and apply in our own lives?

In any Old Testament Scripture we do well to look first for Jesus. And there He is, right there in Job himself! For Job serves as a classic "type" of Jesus, the promised Suffering Servant who was to come. Just as with Job, God the Father took a risk over Jesus, allowing Satan to "have a go", yet in Jesus' case on a much greater stage, with far, far more at stake.

By God's grace, which Job could neither see nor sense at the time, Job held firm, with words of ringing victory such as - "Though he slay me, yet shall I trust him .... I know that my redeemer liveth! (13.15 / 19.25) - the very last sort of words that Satan wanted to hear. Equally by God's grace, Jesus stood firm too.

And then, in the midst of that lovely, stupendous, "godly ear-full" that came Job's way (Chapters 38 - 42), he still bowed before the Lord - "I uttered what I understood not, things too wonderful for me which I knew not .... now mine eye seeth thee .... I abhor myself" (from 42. 3,5,6): what an example, for we who follow, of surrender, acknowledgement and worship!

So from this precious portion of Scripture we see Job winning through, foreshadowing the winning-through of Jesus. We see also the existence and efforts of Satan, who, thanks be to God, won't be winning through. Though his power is now smashed and his doom is sealed, we must remember that he still messes about, but only within the limits that God allows for His own good purposes.

And overriding all, we see Almighty God in all His sovereignty and power. He is the LORD. Nothing exists that is not under His authority. Nothing occurs without His permission. Nothing shall prevent His loving purposes from coming to pass.

By God's grace Job stood firm, Jesus stood firm, and we are to stand firm. The fact that we won't always understand, or prosper, or be comfortable, matters not a jot, for - "the eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms ...." (Deuteronomy 33.27).

And the eternal God knows what He is doing.

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