

SERMON: RICHER THAN BEFORE

Job 23:10

But He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

Introduction

Poor Job! He lost his family, his fortune, and his health. Disaster after disaster swept over him. Even his wife turned against him, but I will give her a lot of slack because she had lost ten children. It is hard for a mother to lose one child, but she had lost ten. His so-called friends accused him of being a sinner and a hypocrite. As Job withered in agony, these so-called friends rubbed salt into his wounds. He was crushed by bereavement, crippled with bankruptcy, and covered with boils from the top of his head to the soles of his feet. Everything was gone. His wife's respect was gone. His seven sons were gone. His three daughters were gone. His seven thousand sheep were gone. His three thousand camels were gone. His five hundred yoke of oxen were gone. His five hundred breeding donkeys were gone. What a great fall for a righteous man, in an era where material prosperity was a sign of spiritual blessing.

Job had no idea why these calamities had overtaken him.

Job was on the terrestrial plane, but he was influenced by a cosmic bet or wager. God had a staff meeting with the heavenly host and Satan barged in. He smarted off at God and said he had been going all over the earth making people sin and creating confusion and havoc. God replied that there was one individual whom he could not influence to sin or to cause to blaspheme. This individual was Job. Satan retorted that Job was loyal because he had been showered with material blessings. Satan claimed that Job had an ulterior motive. If his material possessions were taken away, Job would curse God to His face and abandon his integrity. Satan said if you let me take his family and his stuff, I bet you I can make him sin and "cuss you out." So the bet or wager was on. Job had many questions, but no answers. In the midst of Job's pain and suffering, he remained optimistic. He believed God knew his situation. He believed God was testing him. Job believed he was like gold in the process of being purified and reshaped. How do they refine or purify gold or other precious metals? They put it in a cauldron and heat it until it becomes liquid. Then some of the impurities evaporate. The remaining dross rises to the surface and the refiner skims it off. This process continues until the refiner sees his own image in the liquid metal in the cauldron. The refiner usually sets the molten gold in a mold or cast to allow it to take a desired physical shape. When the heat dissipates the metal returns to its hardened physical state. The refined gold is more brilliant, more solid and more useful than before. Job believed his trials were a refiner's fire he had to endure. He believed God was the refiner. He believed that when it was all over he would be richer and better than before. We are in a pandemic that seems to be receding, yet I believe we all will emerge richer and better than before. Let's look at some of the ways we will be richer than before.

Exposition

1. Greater Strength Than Before.

(Anything That Does Not Kill You, Makes You Stronger.)
(Remember Why and How Oysters Make Pearls.)

2. Greater Wisdom Than Before.

(Now We Know What's Really Important.)

3. Greater Prayer Life Than Before.

(Our Prayers Are More Frequent And More Fervent.)

4. Greater Clarity of Purpose Than Before.

(More Focused On What I Need To Do.)
(A Laser Beam Is Focused Light.)

5. Greater Usefulness Than Before.

(We Want To Be More Of a Blessing to Others.)
(Kinder, More Understanding, More Forgiving.)

6. Greater Urgency to Evangelize Than Before.

(With Death and Sickness Are the Main Topic of Discussion, We Want Everyone Saved.)

7. Greater Appreciation of Blessings Than Before.

(Things Past And Present Are Put Into Correct Perspective.)

8. Greater Praise and Worship Than Before.

(After Surviving and Reflecting, We Are More Thankful To God and It Is Demonstrated By More Intense Praise and Worship.)

Closing Thoughts

When we fast forward to the end of this true story, we will see that Job did indeed emerge richer and better than before. Some of the old preachers put it this way: "He got paid double for his trouble." This should encourage each of us as we continue to trust God, be kinder to one another and "ride out" this horrible pandemic. Give God Glory! Give God All The Glory!

Related Scriptures

Zechariah 13:9; Malachi 3:3; James 1:2-4; 1st Peter 1:7**End Notes**

1. I “borrowed” the title of this sermon from a song composed by my friend and musical collaborator, Maestro Heather Sorenson. Her song, *Richer Than Before*, has great lyrics and a great melody. It is very relevant for these times. It, of course, was written during the pandemic.

2. A verse of John Rippon’s hymn, *How Firm a Foundation*, is a fine commentary on Job 23:10. It has given strength to believers through the ages.

“When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply;
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.”

3. Just as Job had more questions than answers, many Christians, especially theologians, have many questions about the book itself. We will understand it better by and by. In the by and by it probably will not matter; we will be too busy praising God and shouting as we walk down the streets paved with gold. Yet, we must not pretend these questions do not exist. Here are just a few. Why did God allow Satan to barge in on His meeting? Satan was kicked out of heaven, how did he get back in? Why did God even bother to talk to Satan? Was it cruel for Job to be caught in the middle of a contest between God and Satan? God’s ways are not our ways! God bragged on Job and had confidence that Job would not buckle under pressure. This is the most important question for each of us today: Can God brag on and depend on me? I think God can brag on a lot of the members of Antioch-Lithonia!

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