

Job 7:1-7February 5, 2006 – 5th SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Where do I go from here?

- **It's hard at rock bottom. (vv.1-5)**
- **Remember, O God, my life. (vv.6,7)**

In the name of Jesus, our best and truest Friend, dearly redeemed believers:

It's a safe guess that if I asked, "How many here would like to hit rock bottom today?" only the class clowns would raise their hands. Yet this concept is as common as therapists in Hollywood. But most Midwesterners don't want to go "holly-weird," as one radio announcer put it. So they teach their children to just "suck it up" when the going gets tough. One father preached this so hard on his son that the young pastor finally broke. It took a six-month leave of absence and a change of parish for him to continue his faithful and fruitful ministry. One book still unread on my shelf attempts to poke holes in the "hit rock bottom" concept of Alcoholics Anonymous. The book is called *Twelve Steps to Destruction*. Such examples make the point as clear as a new cement floor. Job is in a tough spot here in Chapter 7 of this oldest book of the Bible. Whether you're there today or eventually, we all need to know the answer to just one question: "**Where do I go from here?**" First, look at "**here**" and feel Job's pain...

- **It's hard at rock bottom. (vv.1-5)**

Do you find it helpful if there's always someone worse off than you? Then you can relate to Job. As nearly as we can tell, Job lived about the same time as Abraham, the father of all believers. In the land of Uz east of the Jordan River in about 2200 B.C., Job was a wealthy family man highly respected by everyone, including God Almighty who reckoned Job to be "*blameless and upright.*" (1:1) In practical terms that means Job had faith in Jesus, the Savior first promised to Adam and Eve when they rebelled against God in the Garden and lost not only Paradise, but worst of all, the image of God. Job was holy by faith, yet still a sinner who had to rely on the grace and mercy of God to live a God-pleasing life. By faith Job enjoyed the image of God restored as he trusted in Jesus the Christ to come and shine forth as God in His epiphany. But after losing his family, his possessions and his health, Job is sitting in the dust, scraping painful boils with broken pottery and trying to cope not only with his own despair, but with the misguided judgments of three very legalistic friends. These were highly religious individuals who had their own interpretation and made it more painful than ever for Job down there **hard at rock bottom**.

Listen to the suffering of this man: "*Does not man have hard service on earth? Are not his days like those of a hired man? Like a slave longing for the evening shadows, or a hired man waiting eagerly for his wages, so I have been allotted months of futility, and nights of misery have been assigned to me. When I lie down I think, 'How long before I get up?' The night drags on, and I toss till dawn. My body is clothed with worms and scabs, my skin is broken and festering.*"

Personally, I find it depressing when others have it harder than I. If I'm feeling down and see desperate people, I'm moved to pity and help them. But I also have to ask, "What's my problem?" Isn't it frustrating when you want to rejoice in the LORD, but can't? It may be post-traumatic syndrome, post-holiday blues, post-partum depression, or "Seasonal Affective Disorder" – the "S.A.D." that turned up over 67,000,000 hits on a Google search. Sometimes we can't explain the "Why?" except to admit that sadness and heartache result from sin. The real question is this: "**Where do I go from here?**"

Shall I go to the Internet when my life feels like "*hard service on earth*"? Should I seek out fellow workers when "*hired man*" status is getting me down? When one weary day follows another in a

slave-like life of “*evening shadows*,” when “*waiting eagerly for...wages*” only accentuates the bills, when “*months of futility*” seem to be my only inheritance and “*nights of misery*” are my assignment from God – who can really help me? Friends may be the ones coming in when everyone else is going out, but not for Job. Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar had only one goal in mind after they stopped screaming at the sight of Job and ended their “*seven days and seven nights*” (2:13) of silent treatment. They were determined to prove Job and his family somehow deserved death and disaster for some sin. God had already said otherwise, but these three friends were not listening to God. Little wonder that their sincere efforts only made **rock bottom** all the harder for the man whose body was literally “lavished with worms and scabs,” whose “*skin [was] broken and festering*” with untreated sores. Whether we want to admit it or not, whether we’ve ever been so low or not, **rock bottom** was harder for Job than anyone else because this disaster came directly from Satan and the double-duty permission God gave him to torture Job.

- **Remember, O God, my life. (vv.6,7)**

And that, dear friends, is why logic always fails **at rock bottom**. Job was also asking, “Why?” He insisted rightly that his three hopeless friends were wrong about him. There was no specific sin for which God was punishing him. But Job did sin by questioning God. In what my third-grade son called “a big argument,” this syllogism runs for thirty-seven chapters and nearly ends in disaster. Finally God Himself steps in and calls Job and his friends to account. God will first humble Job in his place for questioning God. He will do the same for us. Instead of destroying us, God uses troubles and trials to humble us and help us admit our sin of questioning God. God did not answer Job; God owes us no explanation either. “*Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation?*” (38:2-4 NIV) Job responded in deep humility: “*My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.*” (42:5-6 NIV)

How did Job get to that point of repentance where God commanded him to pray and sacrifice for his friends? How did he hang on long enough for God to turn his life around and bless him with “*twice as much as he had before*”? (42:16) By faith Job knew the most important question. Not, “Why do I feel so bad?” Not, “Why is God doing this to me?” But, “**Where do I go from here?**” Job went back to God. Job defied all logic that would say, “Since God allowed Satan to do this, forget about God.” Instead faith spoke a simple prayer that passed Job’s lips like this: “*My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle, and they come to an end without hope. Remember, O God, that my life is but a breath; my eyes will never see happiness again.*” You might ask, “What kind of a prayer is that? It sounds so hopeless!” But that, dear friends, only proves how this fellow sinner named Job has run out of resources. Spiritually empty, Job looks to the Holy Spirit of God who gave him life and whose mercy cannot let us sinners die.

By God’s grace when Job reached the end of his rope, he tied a knot around Jesus his Savior. While God keeps watching over him, Job will keep sinking lower and lower into the depths of depression. He cannot know what a great encouragement his experience will be to countless suffering Christians in all the millennia to follow up to this very day. And we cannot know what glorious good God will always bring out of our suffering when as sinner-saints we confess our sins and cling to Jesus as our Savior. But as one wise man said, “In days of drought dig deeper wells.” That’s what Minnesota farmers did back in 1988 when all their ponds dried up like 10,000 lakes. When the rain returned, they had more water.

Deep in suffering we see the light of Christ and confess with Job: “*I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!*” (19:25-27 NIV) No matter what your eyes and heart may say, “**Where do I go from here?**” is the only question. And there is only one good answer: Go back to God and await His time. This too shall pass. And when it does, God’s blessings will come to you. “*[The LORD’s] anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.*” (Psalm 30:5 NIV) Look to God until He brings the morning for Jesus’ sake. Amen.