

Pastor Richard Allen Farmer

Crossroads Church

5587 Redan Rd.

Stone Mountain, GA 30088

770.469.9069

Sitting On Your Ash

Text: Job 2:1-10

Job is, in the words of William Safire, “a human ulcer”.

In chapter 1, Job loses his ten children and all his substantial livestock:

7,000 sheep

3,000 camels

1,000 oxen

500 female donkeys

Job handled his losses in a way that is indicting to you and me. Job worships! (1:22). The wager between The Eternal and The Satan continues.

Satan argues that Job serves God because God has protected him with a hedge (1:10). Satan suggests that though Job has suffered the loss of all his material and familial assets, he would curse God if he were made to *physically* suffer(2:5). So far, everything Job has lost has been *detached* from Job. Yes, he lost his children but Job himself was intact. Now, the Satanic suggestion is that Job would change his level of fidelity to The Eternal if he were to suffer physically. After all, a human will do almost

anything to save him or her self(v. 4b). Abraham lied to save himself. Peter denied knowing Jesus in order to save himself. Game on!! However, the “game” has a limitation. The Satan can *test* Job but cannot *kill* him (2:6b). Somebody here today needs the reminder that even though it appears that you are suffering interminably, there is a limit to what you will suffer.

In Deuteronomy 28, there is a passage in which God articulates the blessings that will accrue to Israel if they obey God (28:1-14). Beginning with verse 15 of that chapter, God tells Israel what to expect if they disobey. Verse 35, describing a disease that many

OT scholars identify as elephantiasis, uses the same wording as we find here in Job 2:7.

Deuteronomy 28:35

*The Lord will strike you in the knees and on the legs with severe boils which cannot be healed, and from the sole of your foot to the top of your head.*

Comment [1]:

Job is now suffering tremendous physical pain.

Other passages in the book bear this out. Job experiences

- Intense pain (*My bones are pierced in me at night, and my gnawing pains take no rest; Job 30:17*)
- Peeling and darkened skin (*My skin grows black and falls from me; Job 30:30a*)

- Pus-filled, erupting sores (*My flesh is caked with worms and dust, my skin is cracked and breaks out afresh*; Job 7:5b)
- Anorexia, emaciation (*My bone clings to my skin and to my flesh*; Job 19:20)
- Fever (*My bones burn with fever*; Job 30:30b)
- Halitosis (Job 19:17)

As she watches his suffering, Mrs. Job, possibly Job's only living relative, mocks his faith. She thinks it's foolish to continue walking with God. Death, in her opinion, would be a finer alternative. "Curse God and die", she says. I thought I knew this story well. I remembered that Job called her a fool. He doesn't.

He suggests that she has begun to borrow the *vocabulary* of foolish women. She *speaks* like a foolish woman is what the text says. We can become so blindsided by the ways of God that we start saying what others say, having no words of our own. Maybe that's what Mrs. Job experienced. She had heard foolish women say, "curse God and die". Now she repeats what she's heard. Job, in response to his wife's suggestion, raises a theological/philosophical question. It is one of the most profound questions a serious lover of God can ever ask. The question hangs in the air as a challenge to the theological climate in which the

Church finds itself. In this “Bless me, bless me” culture, the question is raised, “Shall we indeed accept good from God and shall we not accept adversity?” What a question! Job offers the possibility that we, with our sense of entitlement, might think that we should *only* get good from God. What makes us think that we should not suffer loss... or pain... or inconvenience...or shock... or embarrassment... or grief... or sadness?

Comment [2]:

Here we find Job sitting on his ash...heap.

Jonah 3:6

*Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes.*

Comment [3]:

Job is in deep thought about the ways of God. There on his ash...is God. The same is true for us. In our suffering, we see God. When we are on our ashes, it is tempting to run our mouths and negate the faith we allegedly embrace. But Job controlled his mouth.

Note the last clause of verse 10:

*In all this, Job did not sin with his lips.*

A similar phrase is in 1:22. It is in the “in all this” of life that our true colors begin to show.

Psalm 39:1

*...I will guard my ways, Lest I sin with my tongue; I  
will restrain my mouth with a muzzle, while the  
wicked are before me.*

A stanza from How Firm A Foundation: (sing it)

*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.*

Comment [4]:

Comment [5]:

Could it be that the ash heap experience is **purifying** rather than **punitive**?

Psalm 113:7

*He raises the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the ash heap.*

Comment [6]:

**On our ashes we meet ourselves. On our ashes we meet our theological and philosophical struggles. And on our ashes, we meet our refining, gold-producing God!**

Comment [7]:

Amen