

## **“Back from the Brink”**

Job 42:1-17

For those who have ever experienced a setback, a comeback seems very unlikely at the time. The illusive thrill of success seems so far beyond reach when constantly faced with the agony of defeat. All of us like to hear comeback stories, those in which someone overcomes great obstacles and odds on their way to eventual success. One of the greatest comeback stories in American history is seen in the life of Abraham Lincoln, a man who many consider to be the greatest president our country has ever had. Lincoln led our country through its greatest moral and military crisis it had ever faced, and saved it when it was on the brink of destruction.

But before he was ever president, Lincoln grew up in meager circumstances. When you consider his life and career up until 1860, it was largely one of continual setback:

- 1832—lost his job and was defeated for state legislature
- 1833—failed in business
- 1835—his longtime sweetheart died
- 1836—had a nervous breakdown
- 1838—defeated in nomination for speaker of house
- 1843—defeated in nomination for Congress
- 1846—elected to Congress, but lost renomination in 1848
- 1854—defeated for U.S. Senate
- 1856—defeated in nomination for Vice President

In 1860, Abraham Lincoln was elected as the sixteenth President of the United States, and would go on to lead a successful effort in preserving the Union itself from the brink of collapse, though it would cost him his life.

What we perceive as a setback may in fact be a precursor to a great comeback. Our God is the God of new beginnings. He specializes in bringing beauty from ashes and sunshine from rain. We see this over and over again throughout Scripture.

The life of Job is one of the greatest comeback stories of all time. As we have walked with him through the lonesome valley of loss and loneliness, we have seen him hit rock bottom. He lost his fortune and family, his physical health deteriorated, and his friends accused him of hypocrisy. At just the right time, God speaks to Job out of a whirlwind and puts his suffering in perspective. Here at the close of the book, we witness as Job comes back from the brink.

This is not a fairy tale ending, however.

**Warren Wiersbe** - *"We must not misinterpret this final chapter of Job and conclude that every trial will end with all problems solved, all hard feelings forgiven, and everybody living happily ever after."*

Life does not always play out like it does in the movies.

The last chapter of Job assures us that no matter what happens to us in life, God is the One who writes the final chapter. We survive our trials, but we still carry scars.

### **1. The REALIZATION of Job's faith (42:1-6)**

*"Then Job answered the Lord and said: 'I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge? Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you make it known to Me. I had heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see You; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.'"*

The greatest blessing in Job's life is not regaining his possessions or even being blessed with more children. Job's greatest blessing is the personal and experiential knowledge of God that he gained.

**James 5:11** - **"You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the purpose of the Lord, that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful."**

He realizes that God has all power (v. 1-2)

Another way of saying this is that God is omnipotent. Though he believed in an omnipotent God at the beginning of the book, Job now understands God's power and majesty in a new way. He recognizes God's right to rule his life and accepts His sovereign plan.

He realizes that God has all wisdom (v. 3)

He sees that God is all wise and all knowing. Therefore, His judgments must be true and just, even if they are mysterious to us. Job acknowledged that he had spoken about things that he didn't fully understand, but that God understand with perfection.

He realizes that God has all glory (v. 4-6)

Job's perspective is completely changed. He has emerged from his valley with a renewed and expanded understanding of God's glory. He knows that no matter what comes his way, God is always good and worthy of worship.

Job's knowledge of God is firsthand rather than secondhand. Before, he had believed in God like someone would believe a story that they merely hear with their ears. Now, Job acknowledges that he had personally witnessed God's power and wisdom and glory. He had personally tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious.

Job sees God with the eyes of renewed faith and deeper spiritual understanding. He has been given a greater insight into God's character and a more accurate view of His divine attributes.

illus. of Nebuchadnezzar

**Daniel 4:34-35 - "At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored Him who lives forever, for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation; all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and He does according to His will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand or say to Him, 'What have You done?'"**

Such a vision of God's glory humbles a man rather than make him proud. How does Job respond to such power, wisdom, and glory? Notice what he says:

**42:6 - "therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes."**

To repent in dust and ashes was a cultural sign of total humility before God that expressed one's brokenness and dependence upon God.

God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble.

**Ray Stedman** - *“Job is learning one of life’s hardest lessons: the source of our problems is not God. It’s not other people. We are the source of our problems. And the problem within us is one that only God can cure.”*

This is an example of complete brokenness before God. Job is making no excuses. He is demanding no answers. He is pointing no fingers. Job is simply bowing in worship and submission before God. And it is only after Job gives up trying to defend and justify himself that God begins to heal his wounded spirit.

## **2. The RECONCILIATION of Job’s friends (42:7-9)**

*“After the Lord had spoken these words to Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite: ‘My anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has. Now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams and go to My servant Job and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves. And My servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly. For you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has.’ So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did what the Lord had told them, the Lord accepted Job’s prayer.”*

Not only do we see the realization of Job’s faith in these verses, but notice also what we’re told about the reconciliation of Job’s friends.

Three important principles emerge from these verses:

### The priority of speaking the whole truth

*“You have not spoken of Me what is right.”*

These guys had prided themselves on their great knowledge of God and zeal for His ways, only to now hear God rebuke them for presenting a distorted picture of Him. They had really defamed Him and had not spoken correctly of Him. They had put God in a box by limiting His sovereignty and neglecting His mercy.

God says, “You have not spoken of Me what is right.” Job’s friends had only presented Him as a fearsome Judge who punishes the wicked and rewards the righteous. They had neglected His other traits, such as His mercy and grace, His compassion and love.

God is always and at the same time both righteous and gracious. He is both just and merciful.

**Psalm 103:6-8 - “The Lord works righteousness and justice...the Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.”**

Job’s friends had accused him of hypocrisy, insisting that his misfortune was the result of some sin that he was trying to hide. In their accusation, they were more like Satan than they were like God, whom they claimed to be representing.

How had Job spoken rightly of God in his pain? Four ways:

- He admitted his wrong assumptions without self-defense
- He always adhered to the facts as he saw them
- He took his problem straight to God
- He declared without reservation that God is holy, wise, and good

The price of the sinner’s redemption

*“Therefore take seven bulls and seven rams and go to My servant Job and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves.”*

Job reminds us that there is only one pathway that leads to the sinner’s forgiveness. The blood of a substitute had to shed in order for sin to be atoned for.

The seven bulls and seven rams offered serve as a picture of the selfless service and sacrificial life of Jesus. They picture the death of the sinless Son of God upon the cross who gave Himself up to atone for our sin and folly. The offerings of the Old Testament merely illustrated that they could do nothing to save themselves—their salvation depended upon a substitute who would take their place and pay the price of death.

In order for sinners to be reconciled to God, an exchange has to take place. The righteousness of Jesus has to be given to us, as our sin is laid upon Him. God forgives our sin on the basis of Christ’s sacrifice on our behalf.

**Isaiah 1:18 - “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord, Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool.”**

The power of intercessory prayer

*“My servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly.”*

Job doesn't harbor resentment toward these three men. Instead, he is forgiving and willing to pray for their reconciliation. This is an awesome picture of how believers should be in their relationships with each other. We should be quick to forgive and restore.

**Ephesians 4:32 - “Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ has also forgiven you.”**

Job is acting as a priest who intercedes before God on man's behalf.

Job's prayer for his friends served the purpose of God. The purpose of prayer is not so that we can bend God's will to serve our own will. Instead, prayer is the way that my will becomes bent to God's will. It is through prayer that God reveals to me His plans and purposes. The only reason that God doesn't deal with me according to my folly is because I have a High Priest who intercedes on my behalf.

### **3. The RESTORATION of Job's fortune (42:10-17)**

*“And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job, when he had prayed for his friends. And the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. Then came to him all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before, and ate bread with him in his house. And they showed him sympathy and comforted him for all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him. And each of them gave him a piece of money and a ring of gold. And the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning. And he had 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 yoke of oxen, and 1,000 female donkeys. He had also seven sons and three daughters. And he called the name of the first daughter Jemimah, and the name of the second Keziah, and the name of the the third Keren-happuch. And in all the land there were no women so beautiful as Job's daughters. And their father gave them an inheritance among their brothers. And after this Job lived 140*

*years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, four generations. And Job died, an old man, and full of days."*

Here in the closing verses of the chapter, God restores all that the enemy took from Job's life. And not only does He restore Job's fortune, but He restores it two-fold.

God has a purpose behind every pain that He allows.

**Lamentations 3:31-33 - "For men are not cast off by the Lord forever. Though He brings grief, He will show compassion, so great is His unfailing love. For He does not afflict from His heart or grieve the children of men."**

In other words, God is not sadistic in His dealings with us. He gets no pleasure out of seeing us grieve, but will allow grief to come into our lives for some greater purpose.

#### His family

Notice it was only after Job prayed for his friends that the Lord restored his fortunes.

Reconciliation and forgiveness results in restoration. This is illustrated in the way that Job's brothers and sisters come to him.

- They gather as a family
- They gather for a feast
- They gather in fellowship

#### His flocks

We cannot overlook the fact that Job's restoration does not happen in one afternoon, but that rebuilding will be a slow and tedious process. It will take the rest of his life to rebuild what the enemy destroyed in a matter of seconds.

Job's restoration will involve patience and perseverance.

Job needed up with double of everything that he had before the storm:

- 7,000 sheep were replaced with 14,000 sheep
- 3,000 camels were replaced with 6,000 camels

- 500 yoke of oxen were replaced with 1,000 yoke of oxen

### His future

We are told that God gives Job and his wife ten more children—seven sons and three daughters. Job’s future was not cut off.

**Jeremiah 29:11 - “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for peace and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”**

You say, “Wait a minute. His fortunes and locks are doubled. What about his children? He had 10 children before, and now he has 10 more children. That’s not double!”

When God restored the fortunes of Job, He gave him seven more sons and three more daughters, the same number he had at the beginning of the book.

Job still had seven sons and three daughters in heaven. He hadn’t truly lost his first ten children—he was merely temporarily separated from them, but would one day in the future be reunited with them once more. They were safe in the arms of Jesus! By the end of the book, he really has 14 sons and and 6 daughters—double what he had.

The fact that his daughters are given an inheritance along with their brothers is not a detail that we can overlook. This was very uncommon in the cultures of the ancient east. In the culture of Job’s day, women were viewed as second-class citizens. However, Job had come to learn that there are no second-class citizens in the kingdom of God.

It all illustrates the truth that Job is a changed man living his life for the glory of God His Savior.

**“Jemimah”** - *means dove or peace*

**“Keziah”** - *means sweet fragrance*

**“Keren-Happuch”** - *means beauty and brightness*

Peace, fragrance, and beauty vs. Trouble, stench, and ugliness

The final words of the book of Job reveal to us that Job went on to live another 140 years, seeing his children and their children to the fourth generation. The Bible says that he died an old man, full of days.

Most scholars think that Job was around 70 years of age when his trials began. And if you remember, while in the midst of his pain, Job felt that he had come to the end of his life. He had even wanted to die. What he didn't realize was that God wasn't through with him yet. In fact, he had only lived a third of his life, and God had wonderful plans in store for the remaining two-thirds!

The psalmist wrote about the frailty of life and the brevity of our days:

**Psalm 90:9-12 - "For all our days pass away under Your wrath; we bring our years to an end like a sigh. The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away...So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom."**

I don't want my days to end in a sigh. When it is all said and done and when I come to the end of my life here on earth, I want what is said of Job to be said of me—"And Job died, an old man, and full of days."

If you are presently in the midst of some type of trial or are suffering a tremendous heartache of some kind, I want to encourage you. What you perceive as a setback in your life now may in fact be the staging ground for a great comeback later. Your life is in God's hands, and He has not forgotten or forsaken you.

**Isaiah 50:10 - "Who among you fears the Lord and obeys the voice of His servant? Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God."**

When it is dark, you can trust Him. He knows the way home.