

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, June 21, 2017 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

NO PAIN, NO GAIN
“How God Grows us?”

Gain through Loss, Does that Even Make Sense?
Isaiah 41:13, Job 1, Philippians 3:7-8

TEACHING THE HYMNS OF FAITH
Precious Lord, Take My Hand – When All Is Loss
Isaiah 41:13, Job 1, Selected Scriptures

⁷ But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. ⁸ Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ. ”

– Philippians 3:7-8

“For I, the Lord you God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, ‘Fear not, I will help you.’ ”
–Isaiah 41:13

Again, the quote goes, “No pain, No gain!” And indeed, we recognize that many of life’s greatest achievements, accomplishments, and advances only come through much blood, sweat and tears...through hard work and sacrifice... through some pain, heartache, and much striving. The quote is often applied to athletic success or gains, and the pushing and straining and sometimes brutal workouts associated; or educational success and advancements, and the hard work and sacrifice it takes to achieve the highest marks (grades), educational honors and degrees; or business success and achievement, and the sacrifice of time, resources, hard work and “know-how” to get where you are. We might even hear some who have achieved the pinnacle of great gain (athletically, educationally, in business, or otherwise) say somethings like, “No one knows the hard work and sacrifice, the pain and hardship it took for me to get where I am!”

But the truth is, the quote, “No pain, no gain!” applies beyond athletics, educational goals, or business successes. It applies to life! Not all of the “pains” in the “No pain, no gain!” quote are intentionally inflicted to achieve a goal. Life itself will by default carry with it some heartache, pain, struggle, trials, and hardships... sometimes at great levels. These may either mark times of great defeat and languishing, or they may spur growth, and depth, and in some sense “gain.” Just growing up also includes times of pain. Every heard of “growing pains?” Nobody every escapes the process. And, truth be known, as believers (Christians) we simply cannot become the people God intends us to be without some headaches and heartaches, trials, challenges,

struggles... pain. Even Jesus our Lord **“leaned obedience from the things which He suffered”** according to **Hebrews 5:8**.

We began this series of Biblical studies a couple of weeks ago entitled, “No Pain, No Gain,” taking a look at how God can grow us and advance our walk as believers through the difficulties, the hardships, the trial... the pains we may face in this life. As a matter of fact, it seems that it is through the difficulties that we may find our life and faith growing the most... our greatest gains.

Case in point, a man by the name of Thomas Dorsey (1899-1993 - *not* the famous ball player). Thomas Dorsey has an honored title of 'The Father of Gospel Music', and his music is loved around the world. The journey to this title and fame was a very difficult one at best for Dorsey. Through much success, he also encountered much sadness.

Thomas loved music. His father was a minister and his mother a piano teacher. He learned to play blues piano as a young man. At a very early age, long before his music education at the Chicago College of Composition and Arranging, he was playing piano in a Vaudeville act. After college, he frequented the jazz clubs, gaining quite a reputation as the very talented 'Georgia Tom'. Also called Barrelhouse Tom and Texas Tom. He became proficient as a jazz and blues piano artist and gained quite a reputation on the jazz/blues scene of the early 20's.

In 1921, at the age of 22, Thomas gave his life to Jesus. Almost immediately he left the jazz clubs and began writing Gospel music. He took great effort to circulate his musical scores, but it was three long years before anyone started to notice. Little by little his reputation grew, not only as a songwriter but as a church music director.

In 1932 while the now Reverend Dorsey was leading a church service, a man came on to the platform to hand him a telegram - his wife, Nettie, had just died in childbirth. Within 24 hours his newborn baby died also. Thomas quickly spiraled downward into the depths of despair, doubting the goodness of God and determining never to write another hymn.

A week after that horrible, life changing day, Thomas was deep into his grief, sitting alone at a piano, at a dear friend's house. Dorsey, in his own words, describes what happened next, ***“Into the room came a heavy peace such as I had never known before. As that peace enveloped me, I felt the urge to play the piano. My fingers found a familiar melody and the words to Precious Lord, Take My Hand began to well up from my heart and to spill out of my mouth.”*** God had given him a song that would not only lift him from despair, but would also change the course of his music career.

Precious Lord, Take My Hand has been translated into more than 40 languages, has been sung by some of the biggest names in Gospel music, including Mahalia Jackson and Elvis Presley, and it was Dr. Martin Luther King's favorite hymn. Reverend Thomas Dorsey went on to write many more hymns, including the famous *Peace in the Valley*, which when recorded by the Sunshine Boys in 1951, became the first Gospel song recording in history to sell more than one million copies.

HYMN LYRICS AND QUESTIONS: Precious Lord, Take My Hand (Hymn #456)

*¹Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, let me stand, I am tired, I am weak, I am worn;
Through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the light:
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.*

*²When my way grows drear, precious Lord, linger near, when my life is almost gone,
Hear my cry, hear my call, hold my hand lest I fall:
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.*

*³When the darkness appears and the night draws near, and the day is past and gone,
At the river I stand, guide my feet, hold my hand:
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home. (doesn't appear in our hymnal)*

Questions from the song “Precious Lord, Take My Hand”: The following are some questions to be considered from the song “Precious Lord, Take My Hand” especially regarding the debilitating loss we can encounter in this life and its effects on our Christian experience.

- (1) **In verse 1 of the song what *conditions* does Thomas Dorsey describe that often accompany loss and what does each one say about the effects of grief in our lives?**
*¹Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, let me stand, I am tired, I am weak, I am worn;
Through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the light: Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.* Answer: He speaks of being tired, weak, and worn... grief from loss can leave us worn out, and weary. And when we get tired weak and worn we can certainly set ourselves up for attack from the enemy. That is perhaps, why these three things often are signs of depression. Christians who have suffered loss, need to take care of themselves physically... eat right, get plenty of rest and get light exercise such as walking. These things may help.
- (2) **What is the writer’s plea/prayer in the midst of this, and what does this tell us about how to handle loss in our own lives?** *¹Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, let me stand, I am tired, I am weak, I am worn; Through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the light: Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.* Answer: His cry is for the Lord to hold him in the midst of the storm, and through the darkest night. I think it tells us that the place to run in the midst of these feelings of despair is to the Lord.
- (3) **What do you think the writer of these lyrics means by the words “*when my life is almost gone*” in verse 2... especially in relation to his loss? What he might be telling us about grief and loss and do you feel this reflects an honest account of the effects of grief?**
²When my way grows drear, precious Lord, linger near, when my life is almost gone, Hear my cry, hear my call, hold my hand lest I fall: Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home. Answer: I think he is saying that he feels like his life is over, that there is nothing worth living for anymore, and that life is almost unbearable without his loved ones. I believe that this is a natural feeling in the midst of grief. I think it is interesting that in this verse he also prays, “hold my hand lest I fall” indicating that he knows he is about to sink to a place that he shouldn’t. That is the time to reach out to God the most and cling to Him.

We sing it. We nod in agreement to it. We even say we believe it... and accept it. But when the raw edge of reality touches us, we chafe and resent it. However, loss in this life is often the single catalyst God uses most dramatically in our lives to bring us on toward maturity... toward

“gains” spiritually. But the searing, blinding pain of loss has a way of numbing our spiritual senses and, unfortunately, stunting our growth rather than prompting it. With Job as our example, we want to learn how to not be defeated by and ultimately destroyed by loss in our life, rather to gain in spite of loss.

I. GENERAL FACTS ABOUT EXPERIENCING LOSS

1. **Categories of Loss** – There are different categories of loss in life for sure. Some may seem more severe than others and may affect us on a deeper level and be harder to accept and deal with. For example the loss of life cannot be compared to the loss of a vehicle. One is a material thing and one is a life. Nevertheless, the different categories and severity of losses impact don’t lessen the impact it does have on our lives. Let’s emphasize a couple of these categories:
 - (1) **Loss of significant individuals** – parent or child, mate or relative, close friend or working partner, someone significant in our life.
 - (2) **Loss of personal necessities or benefits** – job, desires, life dream, hard-earned business, health, marriage, home security, financial security
2. **Reactions to Loss** –Of course our reactions can be varied depending on the type and degree of loss. Where we are spiritually in our life will invariably have a lot to do with our reaction.

Let me preface these reactions with a few points:

- Sometimes it takes an amazing perspective to react in uncommon ways when loss comes.
- It is natural for our initial reaction to loss to be of the common sort in most cases.
- There is nothing wrong with grief, tears, heartache, pain in loss. We are wired that way.

There are two different and contrasting reactions to loss.

<i>COMMON REACTION TO LOSS</i>	<i>UNCOMMON REACTION TO LOSS</i>
Shock and panic	Acceptance
Denial	Submission
Anger	Reality
Disillusionment	Growth
Bitterness	Grace
Grief/Depression	Humility
Remorse/Resentment	Brokenness
Blame (self or others/circumstances)	Peace
Denial	Embrace

3. **Perspective to Loss** – Why we have such divergent reactions is because we choose our viewpoints. We rely on our own... or we adopt God’s. **Actually, perspective determines our gains or lack of.**

(1) A Horizontal Perspective = A Human Perspective

This perspective looks to one's own way and is strictly selfish. It is expressed in the desire to be in charge... satisfied and pleased, to be control. The reality is that in loss we are not in control. We are reminded of our own mortality and frailty, that life is fragile... life is "tissue paper thin," that we are dust, that what we like to tightly grasp can be quickly snatched away and is fleeting. In loss we are brought to an abrupt and sometimes startling reminder of our own finitude (finite), our own mortality, our own transience.

(2) A Vertical Perspective = A Divine Perspective

This shows willingness to give up one's own way... to accept a better one, from above. It is expressed in the desire to see beyond the pain... beneath anguish and disappointment, to recognize that God is in control and we are not, to see things from an eternal perspective rather than a temporal (temporary) perspective.

Do you agree or disagree? "Perspective determines growth" – Do you agree or disagree? Why is it true or why is it not true? What do you think this quote means? Record your thoughts: _____

II. JOB: A CLASSIC CASE STUDY IN LOSS (Job 1)

This man's painfully familiar story evokes admiration from us. Our tendency is to glamorize and immortalize him as if his reaction and perspective are impossible to adopt ourselves.

READ:
Job 1:1-5

1. What He Had (vv.1-5) –

(1) Great integrity (v.1) – *"There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil."* What is that verse telling us about Job? He was man of high character and integrity. Job was not perfect or without sin; however it appears from the language that he had put his trust in God for redemption and faithfully lived a God-honoring, sincere life of integrity and consistency personally, martially, and parentally.

3 Important Qualities for Integrity: *(Job is identified as having all three of these) *these are observable traits/qualities, that others see in an individual like Job... someone noticed this about Job's life, however, the truest expression of these qualities if truly present in a person's life are there whether anyone notices them or not.*

1. Blamelessness – What does it mean to be "blameless"? To be blameless means to be innocent, virtuous, faultless, irreproachable, spotless. It means that there is nothing in a life to attack, malign, criticize, besmirch, or impugn (question, assail). This speaks of true character. **D.L. Moody** defined "character" as "what you are in the dark." What do you think he meant by that?

2. **Uprightness** – To be upright means to be decent, honest, respectable, moral, honorable, conscientious, principled. Again, this speaks of a high degree of character. The word "upright" is the English equivalent most often used for the Hebrew word, "yasar." Literally, the word "yasar" (upright) pertains to that which is vertically erect, or horizontally level or smooth. It also means straight or evenly distributed. **What do you think the writer of Job may be telling us about him?** What do you think it means when we say about another person, "He or she is straight as an arrow" (*applied prior to the 60's sexual revolution*)? Listen, this is not a reference to an individual's sexual preferences or proclivities... not really. It is a reference to a person's character. Application in theological settings brings to mind the notions of unchanging standards, correctness, genuineness, and forthrightness.
3. **Righteousness** – When I read the first verse of Job and the telling characteristics of Job's integrity ("*...and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil.*") I can't help but find that Job's "blamelessness" and "uprightness" was grounded in something or someone. In other words, there was a catalyst (something these were rooted in and prompted by) for these qualities of integrity in Job's life... in ours too! What was that? His relationship with God. The noun righteousness/justice in the Bible is the Greek word, "dikaiosune," and bears meanings in the New Testament related to two sources. 1) The major one is the Hebrew thought-world of the Old Testament and particularly the Hebrew word "tsedeq" or "tzedek" (said-eek), which locates the meaning in the sphere of God's gracious, covenantal relation to his people and the appropriate behavior of the covenant partners (Yahweh and His people, Israel) toward each other. The other is the regular use of the words in everyday Greek as spoken in New Testament times, which fixes the meaning in the sphere of a life in conformity to a known standard or law... thus honesty, legality, and so on. So the word has to do with a relationship and the qualities that make that relationship right, pleasing, and healthy. Righteousness has been defined as "being rightly related to God," particularly by living rightly before a holy God. Our right relatedness to God is based on His word on the cross through Jesus Christ, but having given ourselves to him it beacons us to Christ-like way of living. Job 1 speaks of this by describing Job as "... one who feared God and shunned evil." In other words, he was rightly related to God.

Important question: *Think about this, "Is it possible to lose these (blamelessness, uprightness, righteousness)?" How? "Is it possible to lose these in the eyes of others, without actually losing them?" Did Job? Example: Job's friends pretty much told him he must have done something really bad that he was hiding (in the dark) and that is why God was punishing him so much. In other words, he lost his integrity in the eyes of others. He lost his good reputation, and so can we. This is extremely hard to deal with, because basically there is nothing you can do about it. Can you "gain" in this circumstance?*

- (2) **A large family (v.2)** – "*And seven sons and three daughters were born to him.*" Job was blessed with a large family, considered by the Hebrew people a sign of

great blessing and reward of God. The Psalmist tells us in Psalm 127:3-5, ³ *Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward. ⁴ Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. ⁵ Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate.* Job's "quiver" was certainly full with 10 children in all (seven boys and three girls), and by books end God gives him 10 more children (seven more sons and three more girls) Job 42:12-13 tells us, ¹² *Now the LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; for he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand female donkeys. ¹³ He also had seven sons and three daughters.* You heard that right, by books end God has given Job seven more sons and three more daughters to make up for the one's he lost. Yup! Job had 20 children in all. And Job 42:16 tells us, *After this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children and grandchildren for four generations.* Wow! Job's quiver was extremely full and bless with children... you do the math. We don't know if the 10 children Job lost had children or not. We are not told, but it is fairly obvious they were old enough to have had children. If each one of his first set of children each had one child apiece (that would be a conservative estimate for a Hebrew family), that would be 10 children + 10 grandchildren. By the time the book of Job ends those first grandchildren would perhaps have had children of their own. That plus the children God give Job at the books end, and their grandchildren, we are not up to at least 50 children and grandchildren. By time Job was 140 years old and had lived through four generations of children and grandchildren, Job's offspring had to total in the hundreds and possibly the thousands. Full "quiver"! Job was a very blessed man!

Job was a good father and family-man. He loved and cared for his children as seen in Job 1:4-5, and Job's prays and offering of sacrificial petitions to God on behalf of his children, ⁴ *And his sons would go and feast in their houses, each on his appointed day, and would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. ⁵ So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, "It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed^[a] God in their hearts." Thus Job did regularly.*

- (3) **Abundant possessions (v.3)** – ³ *Also, his possessions were seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and a very large household...* He had things! And in his day, as in our, a person of great material assets and material wealth is viewed was very blessed and prosperous. As typically in the ancient Near East, Job's wealth was not measured in money or land holdings, but in his numerous livestock, and his was holding were great by Old Testament standards... even referred to as the *"greatest of all the people of the East."* A major claim by any standard. Solomon held a similar reputation, "... Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East..." (1 Kings4:30). The "east" denotes those living east of Palestine, as the people of the northern Arabian desert did. And of this to say that Job was a very

wealthy man materially. He had perhaps every luxury of his day, and lacked for nothing.

- (4) **Prestige/respect/admiration (v.3)** – The end of **verse 3** tells us, “³...so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the East.” This phrase may not only be referring to his material assets but to his acquired respect, admiration and honor bestowed on him by the people who lived around him. He was well liked and respected... though highly of... garnered great admiration and respect from his peers. We all like to be “liked.” Job was!
- (5) **A righteous walk with God (vv. 1, 4-5)** - **Verse 1** tells us that Job was known as “... one who feared God and shunned evil.” What is scripture tell us about Job? Further **verses 4-5** tell us the level of Job righteous walk with God, even on behalf of his family, “⁴And his sons would go and feast in their houses, each on his appointed day, and would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. ⁵So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, “It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.” Thus Job did regularly.”

Is that even possible? We titled this study “Gain through Loss, Does that Even Make Sense?” In all honesty the title sounds a bit crazy, given the terminology. You’ve either gained or lost! Right? How can you lose something and say you gained and vice-versa how can you gain something and say it came from loss? The two seem mutually exclusive.

READ:
Job 1:13-19

2. **What He Lost (vv. 13-19)** – From a human perspective, Job did not deserve the losses he suffered. He had done no wrong. As a matter of fact, he apparently did everything right. He had walked faithfully with God. He was a good father. He was a good steward of what God had blessed him with. He was well thought of and respected. He was highly “spiritual” and godly. He was blameless, upright and righteous we are told. If anyone should have been the recipient of a “health, wealth and prosperity” theology, well, it should have been Job. As a matter of fact, Job’s story blows the “health, wealth and prosperity” model out of the water, proving it’s unbiblical bent. Job did not deserve the losses he suffered, yet his losses were heavy. This simply reminds us of some simple truths that we have reviewed before concerning loss and the bad things that can come in this life... in our lives. These are very important in clarifying both our perspective about loss in our life as Christians like the kind Job experienced, and our maintaining a healthy spiritual approach in dealing with the very real and certain challenge of loss in our own lives. These are some perspectives we need to keep in mind as believer who experience loss.

4 Initial Clarify Statements About Loss:

1. **It is incorrect to think that because one is a Christian, he or she will never face the sometimes tragic and always heartbreaking challenge of loss in his or her life** – Again a passage we have focused on the past few week comes into view here, and that is Jesus’ words to his disciples (followers) in **John 16:33**, “³³ *These things I*

have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” The word “tribulation” here may refer to all kinds of trials, difficulties, and troubles including the very challenging tribulation of loss. Jesus also reminded us in Matthew 5:45 that God “...makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” In other words, Christians and non-Christian alike experience both the blessing and challenges of life in this fallen world. It rains on the just and the unjust, the believer and the unbeliever alike. Christians are not immune to experiencing loss. If Job teaches us nothing else, He teaches us this.

2. **It is incorrect to think that loss in the life of a believer (Christian) is any less tragic or heartbreaking or that the grief in loss is not as real and deep** – Loss still hurts and grief for a believer is just as difficult to navigate, even though we may have the hope and perspective of heaven. Even Jesus was struck by the grief of loss and He even knew He was about to deal with it miraculously... what am I talking about. In John 11 we read of the death of Jesus’ dear friend, Lazarus. Jesus had been told that Lazarus was sick, but remember He tarried in Jerusalem and Lazarus died. In John 11:33-35, just prior to Jesus raising Lazarus from the the dead we read these words, ³³*Therefore, when Jesus saw her (Mary, Lazarus’ sister) weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. (What is that? Grief!)* ³⁴*And He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to Him, “Lord, come and see.”* ³⁵*Jesus wept. (What is that? Grief)* ³⁶*Then the Jews said, “See how He loved him!”* Do you see it? What just happened? Jesus knew he was about to raise Lazarus from the dead, yet he still experienced the grief and heartbreak of loss... just like all of those standing around that day. Listen, we are human beings and loss hurts, is tragic, and is difficult to deal with in our lives. It is not less real and deep just because we are believers.
3. **It is incorrect to believe that God puts us through loss because we are not spiritual enough, even though loss may spur spiritual growth in us** – Again Jesus words in Matthew 5:45 reminding us that the Father, “...sends rain on the just and on the unjust...” the spiritual and the unspiritual. It doesn’t have anything to do with your spiritual level or spiritual maturity. By the Biblical description, Job may have been one of the most spiritual men to have ever lived. He certainly receive highest praise and recommendation from Jesus (the Lord) in Job 1:8, “*Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?”*” Those are pretty impressive words about Job, and they aren’t coming from some biased family member or even an admiring friend... they came from the pre-incarnate Christ! Wow! How would you like Jesus to be talking about you like that... saying those kind of things about you... bagging on your great spiritual walk and life? The point is Job’s spirituality... his high level of spiritual maturity didn’t immunize his from experiencing loss... even in a big way.
4. **It is incorrect to assume that being exposed to Bible teaching automatically immunizes and inoculates one from loss or even the heartache of loss** – What we mean is, that knowing all what the Bible teaches and the promises contained there. Having lots of Scripture memorized and having all the pat Biblical answers for the tragedy of loss in our lives, doesn’t mean that we won’t feel the sting of loss

and heart break of loss. Read Job, and you will be amazed at Job's knowledge and acquaintance with both God and ancient Hebrew scripture (the Torah, and Old Testament teaching).

Job's losses were real did you notice them. Let's think for a moment at what he lost...

What Job Lost? – 4 Things Job Lost:

- (1) **He lost his material possessions/assets** – Notice verses 13-17, *“¹³ Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house; ¹⁴ and a messenger came to Job and said, “The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, ¹⁵ when the Sabeans raided them and took them away—indeed they have killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!” ¹⁶ While he was still speaking, another also came and said, “The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them; and I alone have escaped to tell you!” ¹⁷ While he was still speaking, another also came and said, “The Chaldeans formed three bands, raided the camels and took them away, yes, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!”* His oxen and donkeys were attacked and stolen by Sabeans (wandering Bedouins from around Uz) (v.15). His sheep and attending servants were burned to death; perhaps struck by lightning (v.16). His camels and additional servants were raided and slain by Chaldeans (nomadic marauders) (v.17) Job first lost all of his material wealth... it was just taken from him, like that! Gone!
- (2) **He lost his family** - In verses 18-19 we read of his loss of his family, *“¹⁸ While he was still speaking, another also came and said, “Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, ¹⁹ and suddenly a great wind came from across^l the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people, and they are dead; and I alone have escaped to tell you!”* His sons and daughters (ten of them) were killed in a home destroyed by a tornado type weather event (vv.18-19).
- (3) **He lost his health** – We get the play by play for this part of Job's story in Job 2 and it's difficult to read at best. Verses 7-8 of Job 2, *“⁷ So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. ⁸ And he took for himself a potsherd with which to scrape himself while he sat in the midst of the ashes.”* Job's wife even suggests that the *“Curse God and die!”* (Job 2:9), it was so bad. As the book progresses Job's health issues deteriorate to near death proportions. He becomes nearly unrecognizable and even prays for death to relieve his of his loss of health.
- (4) **He lost his esteem, admiration and reputation** – If all of that loss was not overwhelmingly enough, Job even lost the one things you would think you can never lose... his esteem, admiration from others and his reputation. I mean think of it! When people die we usually embellish and nearly deify their life, making them sound better than they really were. Job isn't even dead yet and he even loses what little integrity and dignity he had left from the admiration of his wife (his closest friend) and his good friend. In **Job 2:9**, we read of Job's wife's reaction to Jobs

loss, ⁹ *Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!”* He lost the respect and esteem of his wife, who wanted him to let go of his “integrity” and just curse God and die! Wow! Then along come his friends! I’ve always felt like with friends like Jobs, who needs enemies. Verses 11-13 (Job 2) tells us, ¹¹ *Now when Job’s three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, each one came from his own place—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. For they had made an appointment together to come and mourn with him, and to comfort him.* ¹² *And when they raised their eyes from afar, and did not recognize him, they lifted their voices and wept; and each one tore his robe and sprinkled dust on his head toward heaven.* ¹³ *So they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great.”* Over nearly the entire remainder of the book (spanning almost 40 chapters) Job’s friends tell him how terrible he is, how messed up he must be, rebuking him, telling him he must have done something really bad to experience all this loss, and calling him to confess and repent of whatever it is that he did to make God so mad. Job lost the esteem, admiration and respect even of those who should have known him the best.

3. **How it Happened (vv. 13-19)** – It happened rapidly, without warning, with finality, and devastation occurred. The possibility of recovery seemed beyond reach and hopeless. Job experience real loss. It is important for us to see this and understand how “loss” come on us.

How loss happens to us:

- (1) **Suddenly** – Just like with Job, loss can come us rapidly, suddenly when we least expect it, and out of the clear blue
- (2) **Without warning** – For Job, everything was well and good and without warning the storm of loss came on him without alerts or warning, and it not doubt caught him off guard. It is the same for us. Loss usually catches us off guard and without warning.
- (3) **With finality** – Sometimes there can be recovery from loss. Job did eventually recover his health and he recovered his wealth and actually was wealthier than he was before his great loss, but some things can’t be recovered... at least not on this side of heaven. We say it like this, “Material things are replaceable, people are not.” The loss of life... significant life for Job (all of his children), has a finality that can recovered. When someone is take from us in death, they can’t come back to us. We can eventually go to them as believers, but in this life loss in death has a finality which can lead to a deep sense of hopelessness, despair and grief incomparable.
- (4) **With devastating consequences** – There is nothing to say except that loss is devastating... it is! Make no bones about it. The reality is that loss always carries with it devastating consequences for those left in its wake. It is devastating! For us to try to minimize or deny this reality is naïve at best and insensitive and calloused.
- (5) **And bewildering recovery prospects** – “How will I ever recover from this?” become the lingering question in the back of our minds... sometimes in the forefront of our minds. Recovery from Job must has seemed beyond reach. Some

of his own words recorded in the book of Job reflect this feeling of hopelessness at recovery from the loss he had experienced... at least where those things were concerned.

4. **How He Reacted (v. 20)** – Notice Job’s reaction to all of his loss at the end of chapter 1 in Job 1:20-22, *“²⁰ Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. ²¹ And he said: ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.’ ²² In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.”* Wow! What a reaction? What a beautiful and uncanny reaction? What a surprising reaction... even a holy reaction? Remember, Job has just lost everything... his wealth, his home, his family, about to lose his health, his reputation! Job had been left with a choice... one not to be lightly regarded. Which way should he turn? Would he choose horizontal or vertical thinking? Would he choose the human approach to such a level of loss... despondency, depression, even suicide (something his wife seems to suggest a little later)... or would he choose a different way... a more heavenward approach. Incredible as his reaction may seem, it is not impossible. Before ever voicing words he arose, tore his robe, shaved his head, fell to the ground... and did what? Worshiped! His choice of viewpoint was quickly indicated by his prayer in **verse 21**,

“Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.”

Job had been careful not to cement into his mind great, unrealistic, airtight expectations. He viewed himself as naked before God, whether he had people and things or not. Perhaps we should not pass quickly over the commentary on his response, which is recorded in **verse 22**,

“In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.”

As mentioned a little later in the second chapter, after another debilitating blow to Job’s health and ego his wife give him this rebuke, scolding, and unhelpful advice in Job 2:9-10, *“⁹ Then his wife said to him, ‘Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!’ ¹⁰ But he said to her, ‘You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?’ In all this Job did not sin with his lips.”* There it is again... those beautiful words, *“in all this Job did not sin with his lips.”*

How Job reacted... we may too:

- (1) **Proper mourning and grief (v.20)** – *“²⁰ Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped.”* Listen, we should mourn loss. Grief is healthy. It’s okay to grieve and mourn. God has wired us that way. But Job’s grief did not give way to total despair and hopelessness, and proper mourning always leads to God who is our strength and comfort in loss. God and should be worshipped even in loss, as a matter of fact losing what we have may in some way

be a reminder that we had it all and what it meant to us. What a gift! We mourn loss, because our loss meant something to us. God be praised!

- (2) **Reverent worship (v.21)** – Job really did respond with worship. Whereas verse 20 says it, **verse 21** shows it, *“And he (Job) said, ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.’”*
- **He humbled himself before God** – He fell to the ground indicating humility and brokenness before God. *“Then he fell to the ground in worship...”* (v.20)
 - **He acknowledge his need for God** – *“Naked I came from my mother’s womb and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away...”* (v.21)
 - **He acknowledged God and who God is... the give of life and blessing** - *“Naked I came from my mother’s womb and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.”* (v.21)
- (3) **A healthy truth (v.22)** – **Verse 21** says, *“²² In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.”* Job didn’t blame God, or curse God, or shake his fist in the face of God. Rather, he just trusted what he didn’t understand and could not change, and trusted God to see him through it.

Something to remember: **A New Normal** - When we suffer loss our “normal”... what is normal for us has been permanently altered in some way and we will never feel that normal again. But we can find a new normal. The problem with loss is that we don’t want to forget what we have “lost” and somehow we feel that if we move on we will somehow be forgetting and dishonoring what was lost. If we approach it as a “new normal” we have to find, we are not forgetting what is lost, but simply learning to live without that in our life... a new normal.

III. LINGERING LESSONS LEARNED IN LOSS – Lessons Learned from a Seasoned Sufferer

Life-discoveries which were made by Job can be summarized in the three following realities... lessons learned in loss.

1. **A New Perspective - Our major goal in life is not to be happy or satisfied, but to glorify God (Job 5:17-21)**
2. **A New Reality - The path of obedience is marked by times of loss and suffering (Job 23:8-14, Hebrews 4:13-16, Hebrews 5:8)**
3. **A New Promise - What is often considered a “loss” now, leads ultimately to great gain “later” (Job 42:10-17)**