

Whose Word, Whose Spirit Came From Thee?



David Wilkerson March 7, 2016

If anyone ever needed to hear a word from God, it was Job. You remember Job's story: God had taken down the protective hedge around him and given Satan permission to try Job's faith. Immediately, chaos broke out in Job's life. All ten of his children were killed when a tornado struck. All his material assets were destroyed—his home, his cattle, his property, everything. Finally, Satan was allowed to attack Job's body. The man was stricken with boils from head to toe.

When three of Job's friends heard about his calamity they gathered to comfort him. "They came every one from his own place; Eliphaz...and Bildad...and Zophar" (Job 2:11). With them was Elihu, an arrogant young minister who came to observe. When these men arrived they barely recognized Job in his disfigured form. He was sitting on a heap of ashes scraping his boils with a broken piece of pottery. The visitors were so shocked they couldn't speak. All they could do was weep. Then they tore their clothes and threw dust on themselves to signify their mourning. They sat speechless with Job for seven days.

By the eighth day, Job could no longer hold his pain inside. He exploded in an anguished cry from his heart: "Oh, that I had never been born. Why didn't I die in my mother's womb? I should never have seen the light of day. I long for death. God has hedged me in" (see Job 3).

Job wasn't mad at God. And he still had a solid foundation of faith. Even in his brokenhearted state Job showed reverence for the Lord. He could still say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (13:15). Yes, followers of Jesus are unhappier by the droves—depressed, discouraged, anxious, discontent, lacking peace. Young people speak of being bored, even with thousands of digital entertainments within their reach. At the end of the day it all leaves them with an internal angst.

But Job was stressed out. He couldn't understand how this could happen to a man who was so faithful, obedient, hungry for God and giving to others. Scripture describes Job as one of the most generous men who ever lived. He fed the poor, cared for widows, took in strangers, clothed the cold and naked. But now he could no longer be God's loving arms to those in need. Instead, his faith was being tested by the very fires of hell.

I believe there is a Job Company living today. Multitudes of faithful, devoted servants of Jesus Christ endure the same kind of anguish that plagued Job. You see, often it's not physical pain that most afflicts us. The most devastating kind of torment can be mental. Christians all over the world today are suffering the brokenness of Job: broken families, devastated hearts, financial burdens, emotional hurts and pain. Their trials can be so powerful and overwhelming they cry out like Job, "Oh, Lord, why has this come upon me?"

How did God receive such language? Was he angry with Job? Did he answer, "How dare you accuse me falsely, Job? You've disgraced my name and misrepresented me. Now you've crossed a line, and you're going to pay." No! The Lord took pity on Job. He understood his servant's battle against the devil's onslaught. Under his compassionate eye, Job's trial was meant as a test to bring forth his faith as pure as gold.

In Job's condition, the worst thing possible is to be given a message from someone with

a wrong spirit.

Sadly, this is exactly what happened to Job. He was surrounded by four men who had the wrong message, and they delivered it in the wrong spirit. All four of these men claimed to have a true word from God for Job. And for four days, they bombarded their friend with a hard, accusing message.

Bildad told Job, "Your children have been taken from you because you've sinned. God doesn't treat a righteous man the way you're being treated. He simply doesn't help evildoers." Zophar added his so-called words of comfort: "Job, you're full of talk. Do you expect us to hold our peace after you've lied to us? You're getting far less than you deserve." Eliphaz advised, "God doesn't put trust in his people. Man is abominable and filthy. You wink at sin, Job."

Finally, Elihu, the arrogant young man, spoke: "Job, your problem is you associate with wicked men. God's eyes are upon you, and he sees all you've done. You should be tried to the end because you defend wicked men. Now you've added rebellion to your sin."

Can you imagine receiving this kind of "ministry" in such a hurting condition? Yet despite Job's anguished cries, he never lost his love for God. Now, however, he had accusations coming at him from all sides. He was being verbally beaten into the dust. The last straw for Job was Bildad's accusation: "No man can be justified before God. No one who's born of a woman is clean in his eyes. Not even the stars are pure in his sight."

At that point Job took a stand. Scripture describes the scene: "But Job answered and said, how hast thou helped him that is without power? How savest thou the arm that hath no strength? How hast thou counseled him that hath no wisdom? And how hast thou plentifully declared the thing as it is? To whom hast thou uttered words? And whose spirit came from thee?" (Job 26:1-4). According to Helen Spurrell's original Hebrew translation, this last verse reads, "From whom have you stolen your message? And whose spirit was it that came out of you?"

Job told these men, in essence, "You say I'm weak, with no strength. But what have you done to strengthen me? You call me a hypocrite and accuse me of indulging in sin. But how have you helped me? You say I'm foolish, blind, without wisdom. But in all your speeches to me, where was a single godly word that convicted or enlightened me? Not one word of healing has come from your lips. I don't hear a message from the throne of God. You merely string together pious words, and they've left me empty. You've only added to my pain."

Then Job asked them this devastating question: "Whose spirit is behind all these sermons? Who's prompting you to deliver this word that's crushing me? Who gave you such a word, void of any compassion for a man overwhelmed with grief?"

Even the most devoted believers today are being stressed to their limits.

Throughout God's house there are problems in marriages, divorce is rampant, families are breaking up and children are rebelling. People are fearful about their finances crumbling, losing their jobs and possible terrorist attacks. Many are in a Job-like condition—hurting, confused, in agony, at wit's end, with no answers or peace. Some even harbor thoughts of giving up and walking away from their faith. The most repeated phrase I hear among Christians now is, "I can't take any more."

I've had to examine my heart as a minister of the Lord. I constantly ask myself, "What message is most needed by God's hurting people? How do I approach his saints as a faithful shepherd, with the true counsel of the Lord? I can't bring them a message from some book or commentary. Lord, what word do you want to speak to your Job Company?"

Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, cried out from his own Job-like experience, praying, "O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing" (Jeremiah 10:24). Spurrell's translation of this last phrase reads, "Not in thine anger, lest thou crush me to atoms." The prophet was saying, "Lord, correct me, but do it gently in love."

When Paul mentored the church at Corinth, the people there moved powerfully in the gifts of the Spirit. The Corinthians were mighty in prayer and they gave generously to the poor. But the congregation was rife with sin. People's lives were filled with strife, fornication, covetousness, drinking, incest.

As an apostle of the Lord, Paul took seriously the admonition in Proverbs: “He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord” (Proverbs 17:15). Paul realized, “I can’t give comfort to people who walk in sin. I can’t reassure them in their iniquity. That would be an abomination. Yet I can’t stand before the righteous people in Corinth and put them under guilt and condemnation. So what message do I bring? How can I correct them yet also strengthen them?”

Paul wrote of his dilemma to the congregation: “What will ye? Shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?” (1 Corinthians 4:21). He put the whole matter to them plainly: “It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife” (5:1). Paul was speaking here of incest. He was telling the Corinthians, “You’ve got a reputation for loose living to the point of permitting incest. You claim to be a holy church that moves in the Spirit, but everybody knows there’s incest going on.”

Here is how Paul chose to approach the situation: “I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:1). He had taken the same approach with the Thessalonians: “We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children” (1 Thessalonians 2:7). “Ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God” (2:11-12).

Why did Paul choose this attitude? He explains, “Having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your [own] obedience is fulfilled” (2 Corinthians 10:6). The apostle made his point absolutely clear: “If you’re going to wage a successful war against sin in someone else, first make sure of your own obedience to God.”

What is the true, effective, powerful spirit that brings life and reaches the heart?

Paul describes this spirit when he writes the Corinthians: “I sense that when I come, I’ll find strife and conflicts among you. Yet, when I see those of you who haven’t repented – still living in gross sin and delusion – I probably won’t be able to speak a word. Instead, all I’ll be able to do is weep and wail. You may not like what you hear coming out of me, but it will be God humbling me, giving me a spirit of brokenness from his very throne” (see 2 Corinthians 12:20-21).

The only way a message can change anyone is when it’s delivered in compassion. That is God’s heart toward his people. Jesus drove home this point with his disciples. He had sent James and John ahead to several villages to prepare the way for his journey to Jerusalem. But when the brothers came to Samaria, the people turned them away. James and John left angry. They asked Jesus, “Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven on that town?”

Jesus rebuked them: “He turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them” (Luke 9:55-56).

James and John thought they were speaking for God. But Jesus made it clear they were being prompted by another spirit entirely. May God keep us all from being physicians of no value. Before we preach, speak, teach or correct anyone, we are always to check our own spirit.

Do you know a brother or sister in Christ who is hurting? God has given you their burden. And you are to bring them only those words he gives you— words of compassion delivered in love. Know the spirit in which you speak, and be sure it is his. By checking your own spirit, may his healing balm flow through you mightily to all who are hurting. Amen! ?

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