

Title: Our Only Lasting Possession

Text: Job 1: 21

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Turn in your Bibles and let's read the first two chapters of Job. (Job 1: 1-22; 2: 1-10) Note Job 1: 21 and Job 2: 10.

Job was the greatest man in the east. He was very wealthy. Yet, he had more than worldly possessions, even more than family. He had a fear of God in his heart. Therefore, before God, his dealings with God and men, was full of integrity, "perfect and upright." He "eschewed evil." He abstained from the appearance of evil. If he even remotely suspected God or men might look upon his actions as sinful, Job avoided it. Job had been a very great father. Job was not concerned his children might sin in word or deed, only in heart. It shows that Job taught his family well. All this was because Job "feared God." He revered God in his heart. His true riches were his union with God, in Spirit and Truth in Christ! The chief lesson we learn from Job is that true life and true riches is having Christ Jesus, God our Savior, not temporal possessions. Christ is "Our Only Lasting Possession." So God gave Satan permission to take his temporal possession, later even his health. But when news came to Job this is what he said,

Job 1: 20: Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, 21: And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. 22: In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

MATERIAL THINGS ARE NOT LASTING THINGS

First, learn that material things are not lasting things. Job said, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb and naked shall I return thither." We came from our mothers' womb naked: physically, materially, and spiritually naked.

We were born not only wearing nothing, but unable to do one thing for ourselves, totally dependent on others. We were born materially naked, owning nothing; someone clothed you and fed you. Also, we were born spiritually naked: without righteousness or holiness, without God and without hope; guilty sinners with a vile sin-nature

Job said, "and naked shall I return thither:" We all will certainly return to the dust physically and materially naked.

Ecclesiastes 5:15:...[man] shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand....12:7: Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it

The prince and the pauper may never be treated equal in this life. But they will leave equal. They both shall leave this world naked. So shall you and I. So what is the purpose of life? What ought to be our primary concern, our ultimate goal? What possession should be preeminently consuming our time throughout this life?

It should not be to seek power, position, and possessions or a name or applause. God never teaches men to seek those things. Only the world teaches that. Imagine if you didn't have the world teaching you; you only had God teaching you in the heart. Are we better off heeding God or the world? God never once teaches us to seek the things this world teaches us to seek. God says those things pierce us with arrows. God teaches

us that our purpose is to use the time we have so that we, personally, do not leave this life spiritually naked. Learn not to seek or be overly attached to temporal possession; Christ is the only lasting possession of his people; God's word is forever; eternal life is forever! Seek Christ!

Maude Crawford was a lady in Camden, Arkansas who disappeared in 1950's; her case never solved. It appears she was killed over an inheritance. The suspect received that inheritance. But he spent his life covering his tracks, giving bribes, payoffs. Then the man died with nothing and met God who saw everything. Our life will be just as wasted if we spend it rising to some lofty position or even doing good for humanity, yet we meet God without Christ. "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither." Will you use the time wisely? Will you obtain the one thing needful? Christ is the one thing needful—the only lasting possession!

GOD GIVES AND GOD TAKES AWAY

Secondly, learn that God gives and God takes away as God will. Job said, "The LORD gave and the LORD hath taken away."

Everything between our naked birth and our naked death is the gift of God. We like to boast that we are to praise for earning the things we possess and we tend to blame someone else or second causes when we lose our possessions.

I watched an interview of people who lost their money when the stock market crashed. They said, "We spent hours of hard work earning all that money. It was ours!" Then they blamed investors, the President, and corporations for causing them to lose it. Job had more and lost more than they all. He simply said, "The LORD gave and the LORD hath taken away."

Whatever you and I have in this life, the LORD gave it. "John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." (Jn 3: 27) "For who maketh thee to differ *from another*? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive *it*, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received *it*?" (1 Cor 4: 7)

When we were conceived of corrupt seed—God gave us our temporal life, "For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb." (Ps 139: 13) A faithful wife is a gift of God, "A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones." (Pro 12: 4) Children are a gift from God, "Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward." (Ps 127: 3) Riches, wealth, even the ability to enjoy those things, is the gift of God, "Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this is the gift of God." (Ecc 5: 19) But if those things is all God every gives you then God is fattening you for the slaughter.

Therefore, especially, all spiritual blessings are the gift of God. God's mercy is particular to his people, even while we were infants, "By thee have I been holden up from the womb: thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels: my praise shall be continually of thee." (Ps 71: 6) God told Jeremiah, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." (Jer 1: 5)

Grace is the gift of God given to whomsoever God chooses, "unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." (Eph 4: 7) "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." (Rom 9: 18)

The Holy Spirit is the gift of God, “on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.” (Acts 10: 45) By the Holy Spirit—by the Holy Spirit himself dwelling in our hearts—God has given his people the gift of a guarantee of our salvation, “Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” (2 Cor 1: 22) And it is by the gift of the Holy Spirit himself that we know all these other things which God has freely given to us as his gift, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.” (1 Cor 2: 12)

Faith is a gift of God. No sinner musters up faith in himself of his own will. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Eph 2: 8-9)

We must have the righteousness of God to be accepted of God. Yet, in our flesh there is none righteous, no not one. Therefore, righteousness is the free gift of God! And this gift is given by one, Christ Jesus, “But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many...For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.” (Ro 5: 15, 17)

Even this ministry whereby we hear the gospel preached is the gift of God, “And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.” (2 Cor 5: 18)

Every spiritual blessing by which God enriches us, from the gospel being made effectual in our hearts, even our preservation unto the end, is all the gift of God. Paul said to Corinthian believers, “I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; 6: Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: So that **ye come behind in no gift**; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor 1: 4-8)

Most of all, all these blessing are in Christ himself, God’s unspeakable gift (2 Cor 9: 15) “Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.” (Jn 4: 10) And Christ gave himself for his people, “And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.” (Lu 22: 19)

Therefore, seeing all spiritual blessings are the gift of God in Christ Jesus, who is, himself, God’s unspeakable gift, even so, eternal life is the gift of God, “For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Rom 6: 23)

Brethren, rejoice in God! We have no room to boast of ourselves! All spiritual blessings are the gift of God. These spiritual gifts are gifts that shall never be taken away. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” (Ja 1: 17) Jesus Christ and all spiritual blessings in him is our only lasting possession.

But Job also recognized that it was God who takes away material things and even our health. Job did not blame second causes, though all this evil came from second causes. Satan, the Sabeans, the Chaldeans, fire from heaven and a tornado were used. Yet, Job glorified God, saying, “the LORD hath taken away.”

Job knew the LORD is the first cause of all things; every secondary cause, including Satan, is under the dominion of God.

1 Samuel 2: 6: The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. 7: The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. 8: He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them. 9: He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail.

When good comes, men say, "I am so blessed." But when evil comes, men say, "God did not do this! God was not in this!" Would you rather Satan be in control or God? God said, "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things." (Is 45: 7) "Shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?" (Am 3: 6)

Since, everything we have is the gift of God, God can take away his temporal gifts when he will. And when God takes away it is good, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" (Mt 20: 15) Job said that very thing. In the second chapter, "Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" And to assure us this was not charging God with sin, the Holy Spirit said, "In all this did not Job sin with his lips." (Job 2: 9-10)

The worst evil ever committed was when God used Satan and wicked men to crucify the Son of God, the Lord Jesus. Did that happen by accident? Was Satan in control or God? "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." (Acts 4: 27-28)

Brethren, we rejoice! Since God is absolutely sovereign to do as he will, God shall bring to pass the salvation of his people, "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it." (Is 46: 9-11)

Spurgeon told this story. A gardener was servant to a great master. The servant's job was to tend to the roses. The servant took great care of those roses. He guarded them and protected them. But one day he discovered someone had clipped roses off one of his rose bushes. He was angry. The servant went about asking who cut the roses. Finally, someone said, "The Master cut the roses." The servant said, "Then it is alright. He is the Master, this is his house, those are his roses and I am his servant." Brethren, God is the Master and we are his servants. God gave us the roses and God can cut the roses when he will.

Brethren, the more we understand that God is the first cause, that God gives, that God takes away, the more it will help us cease blaming secondary causes, stop our murmuring against God, and rest in the comfort of know God gave and God has taken away. Therefore, it is right.

CHRIST IS OUR ONLY LASTING POSSESSION

Lastly, learn to thank God at all times because Christ is our only lasting possession. Job said, "Blessed be the name of the LORD."

Satan made the accusation that the only reason Job worshipped God is because of what God gave him.

Job 1: 10: Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. 11: But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.

But it was not merely what God gave that made Job worship the Lord. It was the Lord himself! Job worshipped God because of God, not because of what God gave him. He said, “Bless be the name of the Lord.”

Those who rejoice in God, because he is God, will continue to thank and worship God even when temporal blessings are removed. They worship the Lord himself, not for what they can get out of God. Mercenaries do that! They want streets of gold rather than Christ! Do we praise God the same when he takes away as when he gives? It ought to be our aim. We ought to thank God when he takes away health, the same as when he gives it; when he takes gain, same as when he gives; when he stops success, or gives success; when God takes life, or spares life. Why this is so?

First, blessed be the name of the LORD because God is bringing glory to his name in the evil same as the good. Look to the cross! When God used wicked hands to nail Christ to the cross, God declared his righteousness! He declared God is just—he will by no means clear the guilty—he spared not his own Son when he stood in our place! He declared God is the Justifier—God was in Christ reconciling the world of his elect unto himself—God justified all his people in his Son, Christ Jesus when Christ cried, “It is finished!”

Secondly, blessed the name of the LORD because God is working good for his people even in the evil which God brings to pass. Again look to the cross! Satan meant it for evil, but God worked good by obtaining our eternal redemption. So all lesser evils work our good, too!

Romans 8: 28: And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 29: For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30: Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. 31: What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? 32: He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

Also, blessed be the name of the LORD because it is a gift of God for us to suffer for Christ’s sake, “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.” (Php 1: 29) What a gift! What a reason to bless God!

1 Peter 4: 12: Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: 13: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. 14: If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified....16:...if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

Furthermore, bless be the name of our Lord because when God gives us thorns (as he did Job) allowing Satan to buffet us, God teaches us Christ is our only Strength. Those he loves, as sons, he chastens, lest we become puffed up and turn from Christ. Paul said,

2 Corinthians 12:7: And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure....9: And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my

strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory [thank God for] in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10:...for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Believer, no suffering is easy or enjoyable. It is a knee-jerk reaction to want to be free from all suffering. Right now, while things are good it is easy to say yes to these things for us who believe. But when the suffering comes, God will give more grace so that we can stand. So remember, whatever we suffer, that very suffering is the will of God for you. Therefore, "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." (1 Thess 5: 18) Therefore, let us say with Eli, "It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good." (1 Sam 3: 18)

Let me end by reminding you, first, no matter what we accumulate throughout our days, the bookends of our life declare what comes from our hand the whole way through—nakedness. We came in and leave with nothing. Likewise, we contribute nothing. Salvation is of the LORD

Secondly, true life is not in having and having not. Life is to live upon Christ the Bread from heaven rather than the bread of this earth; to be clothed in Christ's righteousness rather than earthly linen; to be the sheep of Christ's pasture rather than counting sheep in your own pasture. God our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ is the believers only lasting possession!

Lastly, if you do not have Christ, what do you possess? Nothing. You are naked. If you leave this world without Christ, no matter how rich you were in this life, you used your time to accumulate nothing. Job was wealthy. But he had something worth more to him than all that; something he could never lose. So when all was taken away, he could say, "Bless be the name of the LORD." When you have the LORD himself you know, "It shall be well with the righteous!" The believer's only lasting possession is Christ Jesus, the Lord God! So when all other blessings are gone, Christ shall remain—we shall continue to have our "All and in All!" Therefore, when we leave all temporal things behind, having Christ, we shall be able say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord!"

Amen!