

JOB'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE WORD OF GOD

I want to start off by reading you **the song** we sang in Sunday School this morning—"Holy Bible, Book Divine." Please turn in your **hymnals** to page 179 so you can follow along as I read. As I read, notice **the attitude** that the songwriter, John Burton, had toward the Bible:

*Holy Bible book divine, **precious treasure** thou art mine.
Mine to tell me whence I came, mine to teach me what I am.
Mine to chide me when I rove, mine to show a Saviour's love,
Mine thou art to guide and guard, mine to punish or reward.
Mine to comfort in distress, suff'ring in this wilderness,
Mine to show, by living faith, man can triumph over death.
Mine to tell of joys to come and the rebel sinner's doom;
O thou Holy book divine, **precious treasure** thou art mine.*

The Bible was a **precious treasure** to the writer, wasn't it? How precious is the Bible **to you**—and to **me**?

--Imagine what it would be like to have to **bury your Bible**—literally—in the woods and dig it up every time you wanted to read it.

--Imagine not having a Bible in your own language—and having to **learn a new language** if you wanted to read it.

--Imagine never owning—or even seeing—the **entire** Bible and having to share pages of it with other believers.

--Imagine being **disowned by your parents**—and fearing for your life—because you have a Bible.

Although these scenarios are only **imagined** by us, they are **real situations** that some Christians in different parts of the world face. In their circumstances, the Bible is most certainly a **precious treasure** to them, isn't it?

Rather than focus on the attitude that a **hymn writer**—or a **persecuted Christian**—has toward the Bible, we are going to look at the attitude that some of the **Bible writer's** themselves had. They were **inspired by** God—and wrote what **God wanted them to write**—about how they **valued and viewed** God's words to them.

And as we see **their attitude**, I want to remind us again that God included these things in His Word because He **wants us to have** the same attitude! We are not merely **gaining information**—we are being **challenged by an example** that God wants us to follow.

This morning we are going to look at the attitude of a man from the OT by the name of Job. Please turn to Job 23 and follow along as I read verses 8-12.

What was **Job's attitude** toward the Word of God? We see it in the end of vs 12: **"... I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food."** It is not **just** Job's attitude, though. It is the attitude of other **Bible writers**—and the attitude that God wants us as **Bible readers** to have!

Before we dig into Job's statement, let's learn a little bit about him and the situation he was in.

1. The speaker named Job

First, we know that he was a real person. In the OT, the prophet Ezekiel refers to Job—along with Daniel and Noah—in Ezekiel 14:14, 20. In the NT, Job is referred to in James 5:11.

Second, even though the book of Job is in found near the middle of the Bible, the events of Job's life probably took place around the **time of Abraham** in the book of Genesis. Why is that suggestion made?

--No reference in the book of Job to the law of Moses or the nation of Israel.

--According to Job 42:16, Job lived more than 140 yrs—not an uncommon age during Abraham's time.

--Wealth was measured in cattle, land, and servants—a common practice in Abraham's day.

--And in Job 1:5, we see Job offering sacrifices on behalf of his family—meaning he was the priest of the family. That was also true of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

2. The situation of Job

So what was **the situation** Job was in that led him to make this statement? What was **the occasion** that made **Him declare** “I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food?”

Was it because things were **going good** for him? Was it because Job was **healthy...and wealthy...and had it “made in the shade,”** so to speak?

No; that wasn’t the reason at all! In fact, if you know anything about the book of Job, you know it is about Job’s **suffering**. Mark your spot—we’ll come back here in a little bit—but please turn to Job 1.

--In 1:8, God asks Satan what he thinks about His servant Job.

--Look at Satan’s response in vs 9-11.

--In 1:12, God in essence says to “go ahead and take away all that he has—**all his stuff**—but don’t touch him physically.” What happened?

--Job lost his 7000 sheep...and 3000 camels...and 500 yoke of oxen...and 500 mules...and seven sons...and three daughters—all on the same day!

--Satan wasn’t done, though. Look at Job 2:4-5.

--God’s response is in verse 6.

What did Satan do? Look at verses 7-8.

That, my friends, is **suffering**. After that, we see in the end of vs 9 his wife telling him to “curse God, and die,” followed by three so called “friends” that come to him and tell him to repent of the sin he is hiding so God will bless him again! This is the situation that Job was in when God had him make this statement.

Let’s turn back to Job 23:12 and begin to take a closer at...

3. The statement of Job

In spite of all Job **had lost**—and the pain and suffering he was **now going through**—Job’s attitude was “Neither have I gone back from the commandment of His lips; I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.” Was Job just “saying this”—or was **this really his** attitude?

This **was his** attitude—even while in the midst of this trial. How do we know?

A. The proof of Job’s statement

Please follow along as I read verses 1-7. In a nutshell, Job **maintains his innocence**. He wants to meet with God for a “court hearing,” so to speak, and believes he would be “delivered for ever from my judge.”

--We see the same belief being expressed in the end of vs 10 “...when He hath tried me I shall come forth as gold.” Why was Job so confident? Because Job was **not just a hearer** of the Word—he was **a doer!**

--vs 11 “My foot hath held His steps” meaning, “I have followed His paths and ways.”

“...His way have I kept, and not declined” meaning, ‘I walked the way God told me—and did not turn aside to the right or left’

--vs 12 “Neither have I gone back from the commandment of His lips...” In essence, Job was saying, ‘I have not stopped trying to obey and please God—even during this overwhelmingly difficult time!’

What about **us**? What do **we do** when hard times come into our lives?

--Do we get **mad** at God and **become bitter** in our hearts?

--Do we **stop coming to church** because we think God doesn’t love us?

--Do we **stop reading our Bibles** because we believe Satan’s lie that **it doesn’t do any good** to know or obey what God says?

Job didn’t feel that way—and neither should we! In fact, Job is held up as an example of perseverance! **James 5:11** “Behold, we count them happy which **endure**. Ye have heard of the **patience of Job**, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful [compassionate], and of tender mercy.”

--“We count them happy—blessed—which endure;” persevere; “keep on keeping on.”

--“Ye have heard the **patience** of Job...” “Patience” here does not mean what we usually think of when we hear the word. It does **not mean** “remaining calm” with uncooperative children during program practice!

Instead, it carries the idea of “steadfastness, constancy, endurance, and perseverance.”

So again, I ask, what **do you do** when trials come? Spend **more time** in God’s Word—or less?

Next, let’s consider... B. The priority of Job’s statement

How valuable was God’s Word to Job? He esteemed it—treasured it—more than what? “My **necessary** food!”

--**Not**, more than **harmful things** like alcohol...or cigarettes...or drugs

--And **not** more than **unnecessary things** like candy...or cake...or cookies...or ice cream...or soda!

Job treasured God’s Word more than his **necessary food**—meaning the food that kept **him alive**!

God used Moses to write a similar statement in **Deuteronomy 8:3** “And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know **that man doth not live by bread only**, but by **every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord** doth man live.”

And Jesus quoted part of Deut 8:3 when Satan tempted Him to **turn stones into bread** as seen in **Mt 4:4** “...Man shall not live **by bread alone**, but by **every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.**”

What did Job mean when he said he treasured God’s Word more than necessary food? And **what did Moses—and Jesus—mean** when they said, “Man shall not **live by bread alone**, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God?”

All three men were reminding us of this **very important** Bible truth: “There is more to **this** life than this life!”

In other words, there is a life **that follows this one**—and it is **much more important** than this one!

Jesus said in **Luke 12:23** “The life is **more than meat**, and the body is more than raiment.”

I Cor 15:19 “If in **this life only** we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”

I Tim 4:8 “For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the **life that now is**, and of **that which is to come.**”

The priority, then, should be **preparation for the next life**—not the **pursuit of pleasure in this life!** And that is why God—through the words of Job...and Moses...and Jesus...and Paul—emphasized the feeding of **our soul** over the feeding of **our body**.

Job declared: “I have esteemed the words of His [God’s] mouth more than my necessary food.”

--We saw the **proof** of that attitude in his persevering obedience even in the midst of a severe trial.

--And we saw the **priority** of that attitude in his preference of “food” **for the soul** over food **for the body**.

Lastly, let’s consider... C. The profit of Job’s statement

What **good did it do** for Job to esteem—to treasure—God’s Word more important than his necessary food? How did it **help him**; how was it **profitable**? Even more important than how this attitude was **profitable to Job** is how does it profit us? What does treasuring God’s word **do for us**? How does it **benefit and help us**?

i. It will prepare us for judgment

Take your Bibles and turn to Job 9. Notice verses 1-2.

In verse 2, Job asks one of the most important questions a person can ask: “...how should man be just with God?” **Barnes** puts it like this: “How shall sinful man be regarded and treated as righteous by his Maker?” In essence, the question is: ‘How can a sinful person be forgiven by God and allowed into heaven?’

Why is that **an important** question?

Because **Hebrews 9:27** reminds us “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this **the judgment:**”

Every one of us will die... and stand before God... and be judged by Him some day. And because that is true, **every one of us** should want to know how we can be right with God so we can be **prepared to meet Him**.

So how can you and I **be prepared** to meet God? How can we have **forgiveness from God**? The key is **where you look** to find the answer! People look for the answer in a lot of different places, don't they? But you can boil down all the places to look **into two**. **Listen carefully, I didn't say** there are two **right** places to look—I said you can boil down all the places **to two**. You ready; here they are: **outside** the Bible—or **inside** the Bible!

That's it, isn't it? People look for the answer to the question "How can I be right with God" by looking either **inside** the Bible—or **outside** of it. Let's not rush past the fact that what **applies to everyone** applies also **to you**. **Where are you looking** to find the answer? There is **only one right answer**, of course, and that is **inside** the Bible!

Psalm 19:7 "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple."

John 5:39 "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

James 1:21 "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls."

I Peter 1:23 "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

Why is it profitable to treasure God's Word? Why esteem it more than our necessary food?

First, because it prepares us for judgment.

Second, because it... **ii. It provides peace in time of trial**

Again, maybe I'm being over simplistic, but it seems to me we have **one of two** places to look for **peace in the midst of trials**. Where are they? You already know what I'm going to say, don't you? **Outside** the Bible—or **inside** the Bible! Think of all the **precious promises** we have from God that provide comfort & peace.

Isaiah 26:3 "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."

Isaiah 55:8-9 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. ⁹For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

How do these verses give peace? Because it reminds us that **we don't always know why** things are happening—but God does—and God is good and does good!

Mt 11:28 "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

John 14:27 "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Then there's the promise that many of us know and remind ourselves often found in **Hebrews 13:5** "...for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

You know what is interesting about all the promises I've listed here on your outline—**Job didn't have** any of them! They were **all written long after Job** had left this earth!

You know **what else Job didn't know** when he was going through his trial? He didn't know when he was going through it that it **was a Satanic attack** allowed by God to "try" Job "in the fire," so to speak. But in spite of **not knowing why** the trial was taking place—or the **"rest of the story"** like we do—he hung on to what he had of God's word, so much so that he said in **Job 13:15** "though He slay me, yet will I trust Him..."

And that brings us to a third reason it is profitable for us to esteem God's Word more than our necessary food:

iii. It provides us an opportunity to be a blessing to others

That's what happened to Job, wasn't it? Think of the millions of Christians that have stayed faithful to God while going through incredible hardships. How were they able to do that? Because they esteemed God's Word as a treasure in their lives—and the place to go to for peace. And not only did they receive peace, they also inspired others—often times without even realizing it—to look to God and His Word for peace, too!

We *often don't know* what kind of impact we are having on other people by our faithfulness. I don't want to embarrass them, but Art and Don and Mac come to mind. They lost loved ones, but they are still here faithfully serving God. Not sure about you, but that is a blessing to me! I can't help but think that was—and is—a source of blessing and peace to Bob, too, while being way down there in Texas!

Each one of us—whether we realize it or not—have an opportunity to be an example of faithfulness and peace while going through trials. But that won't happen if we look *outside* the Bible for peace. We must look *inside* the Bible for His promises—then **look to Him to keep them!** But we won't do that if His word is not precious to us. How precious is God's Word to you?

“The story is told of a young French girl who had been **born blind**. After she learned to **read by touch**, a friend gave her a Braille copy of the gospel of Mark. She read it so much that her fingers became calloused and insensitive. In an effort to regain her feeling, she cut the skin from the ends of her fingers.

Tragically, however, her calluses were replaced by permanent and even more **insensitive scars**. She sobbingly gave the book a goodbye kiss, saying, **“FAREWELL, FAREWELL, SWEET WORD OF MY HEAVENLY FATHER.”**

But as **she kissed the book**, she discovered that her lips were even more sensitive than her fingers had been, and she spent the rest of her life reading her great treasure **with her lips.**”

That, my friends, is treating the Word of God like a treasure! May that be the heart-beat of each one of us!

So what would God have us do in light of His word?

1. First and foremost, are you ready to meet God? If not...if there are doubts or fears or uncertainty—where are you looking to get the answer? You are either looking inside the Bible—or outside. What you or others think doesn't matter; what matters is what God says!

What does God say? Eternal life and forgiveness is found only in Christ. It is not enough to believe about Christ—you need to put your faith and trust in Him. Have you done that?

2. Second, be honest about your attitude toward God's Word. Is the Bible something you can “take or leave”—or is it something you value and treasure and read and study?

--Knowing what it says—and doing what it says—is the only way you will hear, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”

--Resting on the promises of God will give you peace in the midst of trials

--And you being faithful in the storms of life will be a blessing to others and help them do the same!