

Job: A Man of Heroic Endurance | Chuck Swindoll

Reviewed by Max Frazier in the July 2004 Philogian

Job: A Man of Heroic Endurance is the latest volume in Chuck Swindoll's series "Great Lives from God's Word." The book of Job is among the most difficult in the Bible to read and, at times, it seems nearly impossible to understand. Its poetry is among the most picturesque in all of literature. The dialogue in the book does not read like dialogues found in books today. One wonders at the patience of Job as he just sat there enduring the assaults upon his character by his three friends: Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. I must admit, I don't think I would have just sat there. I am afraid I might have come out swinging and some blood might have started flowing from someone's newly split lip.

But, perhaps most difficult of all is our trying to understand just why God put Job through this time of great testing. We wonder why God never shared with Job what He shared with us at the beginning of the story. As the characters come onto the stage, we know something they never come to know – the challenge that had been presented in the courts of heaven. Job was on display, not because he was inherently wicked, but just the opposite – he was blameless in his time. Through granting permission for Satan to first destroy all that Job held dear to his heart – his family and his possessions – and then to touch Job's health, God was proving the faith of this man. In some ways, what God asked Job to do was similar to what God asked Abraham to do; the only difference being that God eventually revealed to Abraham the reasons why. But the faith of both men were severely tested.

At first, Job's response to these troubles almost seems surreal. After losing everything he owned – he was now bankrupt – and having buried his ten children, worship of God would probably not be high on our agendas. But not so with Job as he responded, "The Lord gave and the Lord took away; Blessed be the name of the Lord." Then, when his health is taken from him and he is forced to comfort himself by scraping the pus from his oozing sores while sitting in the garbage pit, he still refuses to sin.

The author does a masterful job of helping us to fully understand the nature and purpose of the three cycles of speeches that form the core of the book of Job. I think we can summarize the attitude of Job's three friends with the old expression, "With friends like these, who needs enemies?" While seeking to comfort Job, all they could do was to hurl one accusation after another at him, all the while hoping that Job would confess his sins. Yet, Job knows himself. He knows what he has done. He is certain that there is nothing between him and his God. Yes, he may bemoan his existence, even resenting the day of his birth. Yes, he does question why God does not answer him. But Job does not waiver in the essentials. He is confident that his redeemer lives. He is assured that one day he will stand before Him. When the reader completes this portion of Swindoll's masterful treatment, the character of Job begins to take on a whole new meaning.

Finally, the book is worth reading just for the final two chapters. As only Chuck Swindoll can do, concise conclusions/lessons are drawn from the story of Job to help us to first understand ourselves and then to understand the character of God. Perhaps these two chapters should be read first so that the reader will be reflecting upon those lessons as he reads the rest of the book. I have read each of the now seven volumes in this series Swindoll has written. I believe this might be one of the best. I do believe that it will be considered as one of the classic books on Job ever written. I close with Swindoll's words as he closes this book:

Like you, we have no way of knowing what tomorrow may bring... but if it is anything like the past, more storms will come. They will drive us to our knees once again, forcing us to trust Him even though we cannot understand why He would permit such a thing to occur. Like Job, we believe in Him with all our hearts, we want to walk in obedience before Him, and we desire nothing more than to bring greater glory to His name.

Be blessed! Happy Reading!