

## **When Life Falls Apart** Consistent Character 7

We have had the opportunity, during these six weeks of lessons, to observe and examine character. We have tried to define character, but character is often more easily seen than explained.

It seems to be revealed in moments of challenge, both big and small, public and private.

Character is painstakingly woven into the fabric of our lives through habits and disciplines and commitments. Without that diligent work, the stories of challenge will (likely) be stories of failure, rather than stories of success.

In this series, we have featured stories of victory.

A New Testament passage springs to mind on this topic of victory, and it has application for today's study - I John 5:2-4, which says:

2. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.
3. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.
4. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

Matthew Henry's commentary explains further: "He that is born of God is born for God, and consequently for another world. He has a temper and disposition that tend to a higher and better world; and he is furnished with such arms, or such a weapon, whereby he can repel and conquer..."

Perhaps consistent Christian character can be seen as a series of victories, made possible by God, through faith in Christ.

With that in mind, let's approach our text for the day, Job 1:1:

1 ¶ There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.

It sounds like we are being introduced to someone with consistent character.<sup>2</sup> And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters.

Perfect just means having integrity, it describes one who is morally and ethically pure. Another translation for this word is blameless.

Upright means straight, correct, right. This is a person doing the right things.

The means by which he is remaining blameless and doing right is by having a proper reverence for God, and by turning away from (avoiding) evil.

Job seems to have a proper understanding of God and a proper understanding of evil. He is consistent in his mindfulness of these things, and his actions are impacted.

3. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east.

4. And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them.

5. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered 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 did Job continually.

Here we see a man who has been given responsibilities. He can be trusted with these responsibilities.

He is concerned about his own sins and the sins of his family. And he has made a habit of being concerned about this.

If we go on what we know so far, we can make a reasonable case that Job is equipped to face challenges. He has the character to do it.

6. Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.

7. And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

8. And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?

God confirms the authenticity of Job's character.

This was not the public appearance of religiosity. God is pleased with Job's life.

9. Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?

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.

I wonder if some of us seek to develop character for this purpose? To be protected and blessed or to be granted greater responsibility?

God knows the authenticity of Job's character, but Satan calls it into question. (This is the character of Satan.)

11. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.

There are many (very sad) stories that give Satan's assertion validity. Have you known someone that loses something or faces a trial and turns on God?

God knows.

12. And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.

Now, the very dramatic trial of Job's character is about to be seen...

13. And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house:

14. And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them:

15. And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

16. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

17. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

18. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house:

19. And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

Stopping here we are left to wonder what the reaction to such a crisis might be for us. Would the character we have built in the habits, disciplines, and commitments of our lives be sufficient to respond properly?

What about Job?

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.

It is easy to see why God had granted Job great responsibilities. He realized he was a steward.

He continued - likely because it was the habit of his life - to have a proper perspective on God and a proper perspective on sin.

God was still good. Sin was still to be avoided.

The word for worship here is "to bow down." Job kept himself in perspective as well.

22. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

Who would have blamed Job for a crack in his character at this point?

We could have found many excuses for him in our modern era.

Move to chapter 2:

1. Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD.
2. And the LORD said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.
3. And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause.

All this came upon Job for no good reason or "without cause." Yet he maintains his integrity.

We are often looking for reasons. "I will endure if I can just understand it!"

Job understands God.

4. And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.
5. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face.

The Accuser of the Brethren makes another accusation.

6. And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life.

God knows.

7. So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.
8. And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes.

Things get worse for Job. This time we wonder very little about how he will respond.

9. Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die.

10. 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? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.

The character of a man shines through even when those closest to him lose heart. He is the leader (by example) when others begin to doubt. He maintains righteousness when others fail to do right.

Character remains when life falls apart.