

A Tribute to Job's Wife

*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? In all this did not Job sin with his
lips. Job 2:9-10 (KJV)*

I would like to leave a tribute to Job's wife. As far as I know, these two verses are the only direct references we have of her in the Bible. After reading them, we are left with the impression that she was not a very godly, supportive wife. Why else would she tell her husband to curse God and die? How bad is that?

Now, let us examine her remarks in a little broader picture. Job's wife suffered the same loss that Job did. All their children and wealth were gone, and perhaps with it, their honor and standing in their community, and there is a fairly good chance they would have been scoffed at by their ungodly neighbors for trusting in God in the first place. Shame and ridicule, mixed with the pain of their loss. After all, it would have looked like the hand of God was punishing them.

Job's wife, being a woman and a mother, would have been devastated by their loss; perhaps more so than her husband. Especially after burying all their children. Why would she not feel like there was nothing left but to die? One can hardly judge her as irrational under those circumstances. She could not understand why this had happened to them. She was stricken with grief from the loss of their children, and perhaps she thought that God had already turned His back on them, so to curse Him would somehow end their lives and their suffering. Besides all this, Job's boils made him sit in his own silent misery; she must have felt very alone. Yet it perhaps was she who fed Job and his friends as they sat there in silence.

It seems she enters the narrative with the purpose of revealing how alone Job was in his suffering. His wife, the most intimate person to him, lost her faith in God, leaving him without anyone except his three friends, and a fine lot of company they were! In the end, they only heaped more guilt and suffering upon him. There there, we must not be too hard on them either. They said many good things in their discussion. No doubt, they were judging Job by the Old Testament law of God, which promised blessing to the faithful and cursing to the unfaithful.

The story of Job does not tell us whether his wife and children shared his faith in God. The only record we have is of his wife telling him to curse God, and that he offered sacrifices and prayers on behalf of his children, just in case they dishonored God. Would God have allowed Satan to destroy his children if they were not saved? No one knows. In a sense, whether they were or not, does not matter for today's discussion. The point I want to bring to our attention is how his wife responded to the situation they found themselves in. Her words were a reaction to the grief and sorrow she carried inside. Perhaps she was lashing out in pain. Perhaps she had the same thoughts as Job's friends and thought it was surely God's punishment; after all, was not his wealth a sign of God's

blessing? Then, why would you not think it was a curse from God when everything was taken away? Let us not judge her too harshly, even if she told Job to curse God. None of us would know how we would react in her situation.

Now, let us take an example from Job. He was not harsh or unfeeling, nor did he call her a foolish woman, only that she spoke as one. Neither did he criticize or blame her for her outburst. Instead, he simply pointed out that the words she was saying came from pain and despair and were not of faith and confidence in God. Job thought it would be foolish to abandon God at this point in their lives. Though he could not understand what they were going through, he was confident that, no matter the circumstances, God would see them through.

The Bible says that the woman is the weaker vessel (*1 Peter 3:7*). That does not mean they are of less value or inferior. In many things, they are much stronger than men. It seems to me that it means they are meant, by God's design, to be cared for and protected by loving, God-fearing men. God created them to fill a role that men cannot fill. As a result of their natural dependency, they may become overwhelmed and frustrated by a situation and speak their mind like Job's wife. Unfortunately, it may be the only way for them to be heard, and they may get labeled as being dramatic or out of their place. I am not condoning wrong behavior, but it may be an indication their needs are not being met. If something like this happens, we should take a lesson from Job.

Instead of being quick to place judgment, at times we should step back and ask what really is happening. Are there other factors in this person's life that are bringing about frustration? Is this a reaction to circumstances like Job's wife? Sometimes an encouraging word, a listening ear, and a heart of compassion will chase the storm clouds away and allow the sun to shine again. It takes a deep heart connection to truly understand what is happening in another individual's life. Most often, there are deeper things going on than a casual observance or acquaintance will reveal.

We will never know, at least not in this life, if Job's wife embraced the faith and belief in God like her husband. One thing we know for sure is that God was faithful to them. In the end, God blessed Job and his wife with more wealth than before, as well as more children, and grandchildren.

We may not understand how or why God allowed that terrible test to happen, but it has been a comfort and encouragement to generations of people since then. If we disregard the suffering of Job and his wife, the story of their lives has given much more than what they lost. Their account also reveals the working of Satan and the power of God. Satan has no power, but that which God allows him to have.

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