

## Our Personalized Cross

In our experience the cross must become very personal. It must become a personalized cross. But what is a personalized cross? Matthew 16:24 tells us that if a man is going to follow the Lord, he has to deny himself and take up *his* cross and follow Him. He must take up *his* cross daily. It is always referred to as *his* cross — a personalized cross.

The Lord Jesus had His own cross. He had the Pharisees and the Sadducees — the religious people 2,000 years ago. He had His Judas. He had His environment that was against Him, that was ordered before the foundation of the world (Acts 2:23). He had His particular circumstances with particular persons such as Pilate, Caiaphas, and Judas. Everything that happened to Him was His own personal experience of the cross. The Lord Jesus was not rebellious when Judas betrayed Him. He was not rebellious with Caiaphas or with Pilate when they were trying to make Him answer their questions in a way to vindicate Himself. He was not rebellious (Isa. 50:5-6).

The Lord accepted His own trials sent by God. He took everything — one hundred percent. Watch Him when He was under the fiery testing, under His environment. And now the Lord tells us to follow Him. Each of us has to take up *his own* cross. It must become personalized. We must see our environment in the same way the Lord saw His environment.

For God's New Testament economy to be worked out in us, it requires death and resurrection. We have to have *our* cross, and know it in a personal way. In

each of our lives, the Lord has allowed certain situations. He has allowed certain troubles and insults. He has allowed a certain kind of husband, wife, or children. Each of these is a certain kind of environment. And for each, we have to take up the cross in a personal way. Let a man take up *his* personalized cross.

### *Embracing the cross*

To take up our cross means to embrace it. It means to embrace our environment as the cross the Lord has sent to us. To take up our cross is to embrace what God allows in our lives by relating to Him in it. Brothers and sisters, we have to see that the cross must become this personal. But have we really personalized it? For example, you may complain about your husband, or you may have an issue with your wife. You are hoping that the other person will change — he or she is too hard on you and it is too difficult. When you have a blaming attitude, wanting to change the situation, it just tells you that you are a person who has not embraced your cross. The Lord says to such a person, "Let him *take up* his cross and follow Me."

Concerning taking His cross, the Lord said that He set His face "like a flint" (Isa. 50:7). He was on the pathway of the cross. And in our experience, this is the same disposition that must be in us (1 Pet. 4:1). In our daily life, God has allotted to us many dealings — giving us the exact Judas, the exact Caiaphas, the exact Pilate, that we need. He gives us the exact husband, the

### IN THIS ISSUE:

- Our Personalized Cross  
— Pages 1-3, 6-8
- Christ as Our Pioneer  
— Pages 4-5
- Insert

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exact wife, the one that insults us, even the one who betrays us. Can we say that we have taken up our cross? Have we embraced our cross? How personal this is.

### *Paul's personalized cross*

For us to genuinely experience the cross, it must become personalized. In other words, our present environment is no mistake. It is what God has given us to transfer us out of the self-life into the spirit. But we skirt the cross in our environment. We refuse it. We sidestep it. We do not want it. We run away from it. We blame it. But in order to be transferred from our soul to the spirit, we have to take up our cross — take up what has been given to us. This is the essence of 2 Corinthians 12:7 where Paul says, “And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh *was given to me*, a messenger of Satan.”

In God's governmental dealings with us, He utilizes the devil, allowing him to be an instrument in His arrangement of the cross in our lives. Satan entered into Judas. And yet that was allowed under God's sovereignty. Job was touched by Satan, but that was allowed. Paul was attacked by a messenger of Satan, but that was allowed. In each case, that was the cross. That was the cross coming to the Lord Jesus. That was the cross coming to Job, and that was the cross coming to Paul. And in each case, Satan was involved. So in the outward things we have to see that God even uses Satan to effect His purpose, to give us a transfer into the spirit.

Concerning Paul's thorn in the flesh in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, he says that it was given for a purpose: “to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.” When Paul entreated the Lord to remove the thorn, He answered him with, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Then notice Paul's attitude: “Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

In these verses we can see that Paul took up his cross. He accepted his environment, his thorn. But he did not accept it in a passive or light way. Rather, he seems to almost boast: “a thorn in the flesh *was given to me . . . I take pleasure*” (2 Cor. 12:7, 9-10). That means he really embraced this cross for his termination, for the self-life to be terminated. This embracing shows us that the cross must become wholly personal.

This is how we should view it — as something personalized by God. God has taken such an interest in you. He has not left you to yourself. He is so concerned to transfer you into Christ as the source of your living, that He has allowed the devil to stir up things in your environment, producing in you a sense of weakness and reactions. He even allows insults and necessities — things that are against you. All these things cause you to open to Him in a deeper way. A fresh faith arises in you to let the cross terminate you.

### *The cross in daily life*

When you see how the cross is a personalized matter, you see how crucial it is to embrace the very disposition of your husband or wife. You can thank God that it has been well pleasing on His part to give you such a person with such reactions and such a disposition. Or, perhaps He has allowed you to be misunderstood. Misunderstanding is often a big problem in the family life. So today in the Christian world, there is a great deal of focus on marriage, with many books on “how to have a happy marriage.” Many times the emphasis in these writings has nothing to do with God's thought of allowing the cross to operate in our life. Rather, the goal is to improve your marriage so that you could have a happy life and everything would be wonderful according to your natural thought. In other words, your expectation is a “happy marriage,” not Christ. If this is all we are expecting and hoping for, we have missed the heart of God's economy.

We have to see that God's economy in our marriage is to terminate us. So sometimes your husband may be a Judas, betraying you. And sometimes others are like the passersby when the Lord was on the cross. They passed by and wagged their heads — mocking Him, insulting Him. These situations in our lives are the Lord's sovereignty, to terminate the self-life. And yet we chafe under them. We complain, not recognizing that God has gone to all the trouble, even using the devil, to allow something to happen over us to work out His economy.

Consider all that happens in our life at home. What if some pictures were taken of us in our homes? What if some recordings were made of our conversations with our husband or wife? Or what if we could view our reasoning mind on a screen? Just consider it. If we are light and shallow, it is because of the way we have treated the working of the cross which God has measured out to terminate us. The Lord says that to be

His disciple you must take up your cross. *What* is your cross right now? *Who* is your cross today? Can you name your cross? Can you say, “This is *my* cross”? Can you take pleasure in it, as Paul did his? He said that there was “given” to him a thorn in the flesh. Oh, brothers and sisters, there is no full transfer out of the self until we have reached this stage. This is when the cross operates — when we set our face like a flint. There is no question about it. It is not that *maybe* I am on the pathway of the cross. There is only one pathway. There is only one life, and that is this crucified life with many cycles of death and resurrection.

We must respond to the cross. It demands a response. And the response we need is simply the Lord Jesus’ response to His environment: “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth.” That means, “Father, You are not only controlling heaven, but You are controlling the earth. You controlled that whole group of cities that rejected Me. All those cities that would not repent — You controlled it. And now You are hiding these things from the intelligent, because it is well pleasing to You” (Matt. 11:25-26). This was the mentality of the Lord Jesus. And this same disposition and mind which was in Christ Jesus is to be in us (Phil. 2:5). This kind of word exposes how unrenewed we are, how removed we are from God’s thought, and how much we have missed the mark of God’s economy.

### ***Being forced to deal with God***

The cross is a matter of responding to what the Lord has given us. The kind of environment God gives us forces us to deal directly with Him. This was what happened with the Lord Jesus in His agony in Gethsemane when the actual hour came for Him to go to the cross (John 12:27). The Father came in the Lord’s environment, and it meant the cross for Him and forced Him to deal with the Father’s will. The Lord was dealing with the Father in Gethsemane (Heb. 5:7). With His spirit, repeatedly crying “Abba,” and with persistent prayer, He prayed through (Mark 14:36). He had to pray three times due to the intensity of the environment. He had to get through all the pangs of His soul-life (Mark 14:33-34). Finally, He came to the point of saying to the Father, “Not as I will, but as You will” (Matt. 26:39). So we can see that the Lord dealt three times in prayer concerning the environmental “cup” that was given to Him to drink (John 18:11). The cross forced Him to deal with the Father all the way into the willingness of His spirit (Matt. 26:41).

### ***Dealing to have nothing outside of God***

The apostle Paul’s thorn in the flesh forced him to deal with God. He prayed three times that the thorn would be removed, but the Lord did not remove it. Yet out of the dealing, Paul’s whole attitude changed. He accepted the thorn. He embraced it. He took it gladly. This kind of dealing of the cross in our experience means that we do not want anything outside of God. Do you want something outside of God? Do you want your husband or wife to pamper you, to dote over you — to treat you like a king? Do you want that outside of God? In other words, what do we want? To deal with the Lord thoroughly is to deal to the point that we do not want anything outside of God.

### ***Draw a circle around yourself***

In His dealings, the Lord Jesus only wanted the Father’s will. And Paul too only wanted what God had for him. But we ourselves so many times want something else. We want something other than what God is giving us. Because of this, I think the best fellowship that can be given is — draw a circle around yourself. Do not touch anything outside of that circle. Just deal with yourself and want God alone. Just take God. Just pursue God Himself. This is what it means to follow the pathway of the cross. Brothers and sisters, if we do not come to this point in our experience, then we will have to settle for another level of Christian life — a life in which you want a little bit of God, but you want a lot of other things. So you eventually become shallow, empty, without any spiritual weight, because you have settled for another kind of Christian life. You want something else besides God.

Taking the pathway of the cross and dealing with the Lord by the cross means that we do not want anything outside of God. I do not want a marriage outside of God. I do not want a happy family outside of God. I do not want finances outside of God. I do not want a good job outside of God. I do not want to be successful for the Lord outside of God. I do not want to do anything outside of God. I just want God! This was Paul’s attitude in prison in Rome. There he was — bound. If he had wanted something else other than God, he could have never testified, “For to me, to live is Christ” (Phil. 1:21). So also in our own experience in relation to the cross, it is crucial that we want nothing outside of God.

*(Continued on Page 6)*

# Christ as Our Pioneer

**W**hy did the Son of God come to be incarnated as a man? Probably the immediate answer that comes to our mind is redemption — Jesus had to come as a man because without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins (Heb. 9:22). Yet the Bible reveals to us that in becoming a man, Jesus accomplished more than redemption. He not only saved man from sin and hell, but He also fulfilled the original purpose for which man was created. God created man for a specific purpose. And Christ, as a man, fulfilled that purpose.

Now, we know from Genesis that God's purpose for man is twofold: to bear God's image and to have His dominion. This was the original "purpose statement" given by God just before He created man — He said, "Let Us make man in Our *image* . . . let them have *dominion*" (Gen. 1:26-28). What does it mean to bear the image of God? According to the Bible, it simply means to be glorified. When we think of God's *image* we must think of *glory*. When we read that God created man to bear His image, it means that He purposed that man would be glorified. In other words, God intends that man would be filled with Christ as his life, so that ultimately man's whole being — his spirit and soul and body — would be saturated with Christ and radiate Christ. That is, our whole being would be fully conformed to the image of God's Son to the extent that we would become just like Him (Rom. 8:17-23, 28-30; 2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Cor. 15:49; Phil. 3:20-21; Col. 3:4; 1 John 3:1-3).

What then does it mean to have God's dominion? It means to have His kingdom on the earth. When we think of *dominion*, we must think of *kingdom*. That is, God purposed that His dominion and authority would be exercised through man over the whole earth. Man is to be God's representative authority. And when man represents God's authority and exercises His dominion on earth, *that* is the kingdom of God. And this exercise of dominion is particularly directed toward the creeping things (Gen. 1:26). Why? Because they represent Satan, the serpent, and all his fallen angelic hosts (Gen. 3:1, 14-15; Rev. 12:9). In long ages past, Satan, as an archangel, rebelled against God and led myriads of other angels to rebel with him. Thus Satan is spoken of in the Bible as God's enemy. How does God deal with Satan and his rebellion? We must see that He does not deal with Satan directly. He is too majestic for that. Rather, God has created man for the specific purpose of

defeating Satan. Indeed, man is God's chosen instrument to crush the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15).

Hence, God's purpose for man is two-fold: image and dominion. Or to put it in equivalent terms: glory and kingdom. No wonder Paul exhorts us to "have a walk worthy of God who calls you into His own *kingdom and glory*" (1 Thess. 2:12). What a tremendous purpose!

Finally, we must see that this purpose for man is not merely an individual matter. It is not just a matter of each individual believer being glorified and having dominion over Satan. God's purpose is also a corporate matter. God's purpose is to have a corporate entity — the church — which bears the image of God and executes His dominion on earth. The Bible tells us that the church as the bride of Christ will be presented to Him as the *glorious* church (Eph. 5:27); and as the house and city of God, she will be filled with glory and will express God's image to the universe for eternity (Rev. 21:10-11). Unto Him be glory in the church! (Eph. 3:21). God's purpose is to have the kind of church that the gates of Hades cannot prevail against, that has the keys of the kingdom, and that becomes the kingdom of God on earth (Matt. 16:18-19; Rom. 14:17). Thus, we can say that God's eternal purpose is to have man — and man not just individually, but man corporately — in His image and with His dominion.

## *Adam's failure*

Though man was created for such a two-fold purpose, he soon failed in accomplishing it. After God created Adam and Eve, Satan quickly came in and deceived them to disobey God, to sin, and to join him in rebellion against God. Genesis 3 records that dreadful day when man fell. And what an awful day it was! What terrible consequences came out of that day!

Perhaps the most obvious consequence is that man became a sinner, both by nature and by deed. As Paul says, through Adam's disobedience sin entered the world, and death through sin (Rom. 5:12). That is, man became separated from God. In fact, man became God's enemy. However, Adam's failure had more far-reaching consequences than even this. Not only did he become a sinner, not only did he rebel against God and join the ranks of Satan as an enemy of God, but he also forfeited the opportunity of fulfilling the purpose for which he was originally created. This is why Paul says that we all have sinned *and fall short of the glory of God* (Rom. 3:23). Most of us realize that we have sinned. But do we realize that we have come short of the glory

of God? that we have come short of God's original purpose over us? God created us to bear His image, His glory — but we have come woefully short of fulfilling that purpose.

Did God therefore give up His original purpose for man? Praise Him, He did not! Centuries after the fall of man, King David reiterated the original purpose for man when he asked God, "What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You care for him?" (see Psa. 8). In other words, David, after gazing at the heavens and considering the vastness of all creation, asked God why it is that man is so supremely important to Him. The immediate answer, as given in this Psalm, is that man is to be crowned with glory and honor (that is, to bear God's image) and to have dominion over the works of His hands (vv. 4-8). God is so mindful of man because of His original purpose for him. Even after the fall, God still desires that man would fulfill His two-fold purpose of image and dominion.

### *Not only Redeemer, but also Pioneer*

So let us return to our initial question — Why did Jesus Christ, the Son of God, become a man? Of course, Christ became a man to redeem us. He shed His blood to cleanse us from sin, to justify us before God, and to purchase us back to Himself. But the Lord Jesus needed to accomplish more than redemption. Why? Because redemption by itself does not fulfill God's original purpose for man. Redemption lifts man from his fallen state in order that God's original purpose over him can be fulfilled. As sinners, we were disqualified from fulfilling the original purpose. But now redemption has brought us back to the place where God's original purpose can be fulfilled.

Now it is crucial to lay hold of this fact: the Lord Jesus did not accomplish redemption and then leave the work of fulfilling the original purpose up to us. He did not redeem us and then say, "Okay, now that you are justified, go and fulfill My purpose of image and dominion." No! Jesus Christ did *all the work* on our behalf. He not only died for us, but He also lived for us. He lived a life that fulfilled God's original purpose for man.

This is why the Bible calls Jesus our Pioneer (Heb. 2:10). Hebrews 2 reveals that the man Jesus fulfilled the purpose stated in Genesis 1:26-28 and restated in Psalm 8. Psalm 8 tells us that man is to be crowned with glory and honor and that he is to have dominion over the works of God's hands. Then Hebrews 2 clearly reveals that it was Jesus, as a man, who fulfilled this purpose. Jesus was the One who, as the Son of God,

emptied Himself of glory and humbled Himself to become a man. It was Jesus who lived a perfect human life, who lived sinlessly, and who lived completely obedient to the Father and utterly dependent upon the Father. It was Jesus who defeated Satan at every turn. It was Jesus who lived a human life that no one else has ever lived.

Then Jesus died on the cross and after three days was raised from the dead. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus, the man, utterly conquered Satan (Heb. 2:14). The Seed of the woman crushed the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15). Amen! Not only so — when Jesus was raised from the dead, He was glorified. Not only did He assume the glory that He had with the Father in eternity as the Son of God, but He also glorified His humanity. That is, Jesus brought His humanity into the glory. His spirit, soul, and body have now been glorified, so that at this moment, there is a man in the glory! There is a glorified man seated at God's right hand!

By such an accomplishment the Lord Jesus fulfilled God's original purpose for man. Now there is a man who bears the image of God. Now there is a man who has God's dominion, especially over Satan. In our fallen condition, we could never have accomplished this. We needed a Pioneer to do it for us. Just like America needed a Lewis and Clark to blaze a trail to the Oregon coast, so we needed the man Jesus to blaze the trail to glory! We needed a Forerunner to go before us and enter the glory on our behalf (Heb. 6:20).

We all know the principle of pioneering. Once the trail has been blazed, many more can follow. A pioneer does not blaze a trail only for himself. Rather, he does it for the many. In the same way, Jesus did not pioneer the way to glory merely for Himself. Hebrews 2:10 tells us that our Pioneer is now leading *many sons to glory!* Because He pioneered the way, we (the many sons) can now follow Him. Christ as our Forerunner has entered within the veil of God's presence *for us*. Not just for Himself, but for us.

What a wonderful realization it is that Jesus did not come merely to cleanse us from sin and make us right with God. As wonderful as redemption is, we can see that He also came to lead us into glory — to fulfill God's awesome original purpose for man. Jesus came not only as our Redeemer, but also as our Pioneer. And because He has led the way into glory, all of us can now follow. Our Lord Jesus has cut the way for all of His redeemed to be brought into glory.

*(To be continued)*

— Kirk Eland

### *Dealing to recognize God's sovereignty*

Dealing with God in this way also causes us to recognize God's absolute sovereignty in our experience. God can do what He wants to do. He can allow what He wants to allow. And we bow. Without any deliverance and without any answer, we just bow and acknowledge, "You are God! I don't need to know the reason for this environment, and I don't need an answer. Neither do I need some kind of deliverance outside of You. I just need to worship You and praise You. You are God and You do what You want to do with me."

Recognizing God's sovereignty is the whole lesson that Job ultimately learned in the dealings he had. When the cross came to him in Job chapters 1 and 2, outwardly he lost everything. He was even afflicted with painful boils over his whole body. This environment precipitated a lot of empty talk. Everyone was trying to find an answer for why he had all these problems. Job's three friends and Job himself were all trying to analyze the situation, seeking an answer. Ultimately, Job's mouth was shut: "The words of Job are ended" (31:40). Praise the Lord! Our mouth needs to be shut. Our words need to be ended. No more words means no more striving, no more trying to get an answer. This indicates that Job had been dealt with to the point of recognizing God's sovereignty.

### *God comes in*

When Job's words were ended, God came in. He came in first through a young man named Elihu. Job 32:2-3 says, <sup>2</sup> "Then the wrath of Elihu . . . was aroused against Job; his wrath was aroused because he justified himself rather than God. <sup>3</sup> Also against his three friends his wrath was aroused, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job." So here Elihu comes into the situation after listening to Job and his three friends. Elihu was there during all their conversation from chapters 3—31. He was standing by, just holding himself in, boiling, burning in his spirit, wanting to release his spirit to bring God into Job's overwhelming environment.

Many times we are just like Job's comforters — we talk a lot but *never bring God in*. In chapter 32 Elihu brought God in, because he brought the human spirit in. In verse 8 Elihu says, "But there is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding." It is the breath of the Almighty that gives us an understanding of what is going on in our environment.

It is the spirit of man that brings God in. Oh, how precious it is when all of a sudden, in the middle of empty talk, analysis, reasons, and all kinds of conversation, someone opens up his spirit and God comes in. And when God comes in He does not give you any answer. He does not deliver you. He does not give you reasons. He just comes in to speak and say that He can do whatever He wants to do. And He is going to do what He wants to do whether we approve of it or not.

Your environment is under God's mighty hand, and if He determines in His council to allot certain situations to you, that is up to Him. You cannot do a thing about it. He is God. And this is what Elihu began to speak to Job and his friends in Job 32:21-22. There is no flattery here. Elihu says to them, <sup>21</sup> "Let me not, I pray, show partiality to anyone; nor let me flatter any man. <sup>22</sup> For I do not know how to flatter, else my Maker would soon take me away." Elihu was not going to speak what they would like to hear. He was just going to speak the truth, that is, that God can do what He wants to do.

Because Elihu released his spirit in his speaking, his words became an introduction into the Lord's own speaking. Job 38:1-3 begins, <sup>1</sup> "Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said: <sup>2</sup> Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge? <sup>3</sup> Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me." When God comes in and begins to speak concerning Job's situation, He does not answer Job's questions. He does not give him any answer, because Job is contending with Him. Job has a controversy with God. In trying to find the answer, Job is justifying himself and condemning God. This is how proud his self was, how self-righteous he was — he was vindicating himself and virtually blaming God. Eventually this was all exposed.

When God comes in, He doesn't get on Job's level. Instead, He begins to speak in this way — "Where were you?" In verses 4-5 He asks Job, <sup>4</sup> "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. <sup>5</sup> Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it?" God is bringing in some humor here: "Surely, Job, you know about these things!" Then the Lord displays more of His wondrous works in creation by telling Job about the sea: <sup>8</sup> "Or who shut in the sea with doors, when it burst forth and issued from the womb . . . <sup>10</sup> When I fixed My limit for it, and set bars and doors; <sup>11</sup> when I said, This far you may come, but no farther, and here your proud waves must stop!" (vv. 8,10-11).

At this point, God begins to expose Job's problem — his pride. And all through His speaking to Job, God uses the word pride. It is pride and self-righteousness in Job's hidden self-life that the Lord was coming to deal with. But Job was blinded to all this. He just wanted to know why he had all these problems — why he lost his children, why he lost his possessions, why he was afflicted with boils. He was trying to figure it out. Yet, all the while, God was dealing with this man according to his deepest need — the breaking of his pride.

### *God's way of talking*

God uses all kinds of illustrations in nature to expose the pride in Job's hidden self. In Job 38:17-18, the Lord says to Job, <sup>17</sup> "Have the gates of death been revealed to you? Or have you seen the doors of the shadow of death?" <sup>18</sup> "Have you comprehended the breadth of the earth? Tell Me, if you know all this." In other words, the Lord is saying, "Job, can you comprehend what I have been doing?" Then the Lord questions Job about his knowledge of light and darkness, snow and hail, the wind, the rain, the constellations, and the clouds (vv. 19-38). God tells Job to observe all these things, while all the time presenting this penetrating question, "Where were you?" It was as if He was asking, "Did I consult you? I am God! I do what I want to do." In this way God was breaking down Job's pride.

In the same way, God comes to us, asking, "Why are you complaining about your husband?" or "Why are you finding fault with your wife? Do you think I made a mistake with you? Why are you questioning Me? What answer are you looking for? I am God. I do with you what I want to do with you. I have not made one mistake with you. There has not been one insult, one neglect, one thing done to you, that I have not known about. Not one sparrow falls to the ground apart from the Father knowing it, and the hairs of your head are all numbered. I am God. I send the cross in the form that I choose to send it."

In verse 39 the Lord asks Job, "Can you hunt the prey for the lion?" And in verse 41 He asks Job who it is that provides food for the raven. Then in Job 39:1 the Lord questions Job about the mountain goats: "Do you know the time when the wild mountain goats bear young?" It was as if He was telling Job to study all the creatures He had made — the wild donkey, the wild ox, the ostrich, the horse, the hawk, the eagle (vv. 5-30). God's purpose in bringing all these creatures before Job is to cause him to realize that he does not know

anything. And then in Job 40:2 the Lord further answers Job, "Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him?" Job was finding fault with God. Now God challenges Job — "Are you going to contend with the Almighty?" Job had a controversy with God. This is just like us.

### *Dealing until there is no more controversy*

Look at the whole universe. Look at the animal life. Look at what God wanted to do and did. Job, do you think God made a mistake with your boils? Did He make a mistake in taking your children away? Are you going to contend? Do you have a controversy with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer God's kind of questioning, and he will be subdued. Job 40:3-4 says, <sup>3</sup> "Then Job answered the Lord and said: <sup>4</sup> Behold, I am vile." Here Job is beginning to break down. Then he adds, "What shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth. Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; yes, twice, but I will proceed no further" (v. 5). Job's mouth was stopped.

It is the same with us. One day we see God! God has done what He wanted to do. So there is no complaint, no argument, no questions. Our mouth is stopped. That is when God becomes real to us. That is why Job could say, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, *but now my eye sees You*" (42:5). Because Job saw that God did what He wanted to do the way He wanted to do it, he made no further inquiries. Once God revealed Himself to Job, he did not need any more answers for his understanding.

Then finally, in Job chapters 40 and 41 the Lord specifically pinpoints the mainspring of Job's self. Job's problem was his hidden, proud self. In Job 40:8 the Lord says to Job, "Would you indeed annul My judgment? Would you condemn Me that you may be justified?" That is how far Job had gone in his pride and self-justification — to the point of actually condemning God. Then in verses 11-12 the Lord says to Job, <sup>11</sup> "Disperse the rage of your wrath; look on everyone who is proud, and humble him. <sup>12</sup> Look on everyone who is proud, and bring him low." This is God speaking. It is God who deals with the proud to make him humble.

Then the Lord says in verse 15, "Look now at the behemoth, which I made along with you." Here the Lord's sense of humor comes out. The "behemoth" is the hippopotamus. So the Lord is saying, "Job, behold the hippopotamus. I made him like I made you." Then

*(Continued on Page 8)*

(Continued from Page 7)

the Lord describes the hippopotamus in verses 15- 24. Look at this huge animal— how strong he is. Who can handle him? Who can tame him? Who can trap him? How fierce he is! He is not afraid of anything. He is so confident. And do you think he could be caught with a fishhook? Do you think that a fishhook could catch a hippopotamus?

### *God knows how to deal with a proud self*

God knows how to deal with a hippopotamus. He knows how to catch it. The hippopotamus symbolizes a proud self — strong and confident. You cannot catch it with a hook. You have to catch it with boils. You have to catch it with the whole family being taken. You have to catch it with the wealth disappearing. You have to catch it with insults. The only way to deal with this proud self that is so strong, like a hippopotamus, is the way God did it.

Then the Lord uses another illustration in Job 41:1-34. In verse 1 He says, “Can you draw out Leviathan with a hook?” Leviathan is the crocodile. Here the Lord spends a whole chapter describing the crocodile: <sup>1</sup> “Can you . . . snare his tongue with a line which you lower? <sup>2</sup> Can you put a reed through his nose, or pierce his jaw with a hook?” In other words, you are talking about impossibilities when you talk about dealing with a crocodile. How tight, how whole, how strong is the crocodile! This describes the self. It is just a crocodile — no one can deal with this crocodile. Verse 24 says, “His heart is as hard as stone.” And then verse 29 tells us, “He laughs at the threat of javelins.” Nothing can penetrate. Then verses 33-34 say, <sup>33</sup> “On earth there is nothing like him, which is made without fear. <sup>34</sup> He beholds every high thing; he is king over all the children of pride.”

### *Seeing God's way*

The Lord describes the self as proud and impenetrable, just like the hippopotamus and the crocodile. This is how He talked to Job. He showed him that there is no human way to handle these untamed animals. But God has a way to touch the proud. Which way is it? It is just God's way. It is whatever He does. It is whatever He has for you in your environment. And it was with this dawning realization produced through his environment that Job answered the Lord: “I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You” (42:2). In other words, Job saw

that God can do all things. No purpose, no design, and no plan of His can be thwarted.

In all this speaking, God was brought in and Job's mouth was shut. He saw that his environment was altogether under the sovereignty of God. In verse 3 he says to the Lord, “You asked, ‘Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?’ Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand.” Here Job is acknowledging that he darkened the whole situation. He complained. He tried to get an answer. He tried to solve the problem. But he did not understand anything. He had no knowledge. These were “things too wonderful” for him, which he did not know.

Then in verses 5-6 Job says to the Lord, <sup>5</sup> “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. <sup>6</sup> Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” Praise the Lord. This is God's way. He just comes in our environment and does what He needs to do because He knows He is dealing with a proud self — a hippopotamus and a crocodile. And you cannot catch this self with a fishhook. It has to be in God's way. And when we see it this way, we know God. We see God. How do we see Him? We see Him in the way He has measured the exact persons, matters, things — the exact environments — to cause us to abhor the self and terminate it. When we take up our personalized cross, we are wonderfully transferred out of our self and into Christ.\*

— Bill Freeman

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\* This article is taken from chapter six of the book, *The Cross and the Self*. This book of 296 pages may be ordered for \$6.00 from: **Ministry Publications**, P.O. Box 12222, Scottsdale, AZ 85267 • Phone: (602) 948-4050 • Fax: (602) 922-1338.

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