



Act One, Scene one —

Darkness Dawns — Job 1 & 2

INTRODUCTION

Joan Lefkow was walking down a Chicago street flanked by federal marshals when a panhandler walked up to her and said, "God bless you, Judge Lefkow."

It has been nine months since U.S. District Judge Joan Humphrey Lefkow's name and face made relentless news, but what happened to her the night of Feb. 28 still haunts her days and stirs the souls of strangers.

In May 2000, Judge Lefkow presided over the enforcement of a high-profile trademark infringement case against the World Church of the Creator, an organization run by white supremacist leader Matthew F. Hale. The TE-TA-MA Truth Foundation, a peaceful, multicultural church in Oregon, sued Hale's church for using the name Church of the Creator. Some argued against the validity of the suit because Hale's group had been using the name since 1973, but the Foundation had trademarked it in 1987, and no contest was filed against the trademark within a five-year period, making their ownership legally incontestable[citation needed]. In January 2002, Lefkow ruled in favor of Hale, but her decision was

overturned on appeal. On July 25, Lefkow ruled against Hale, saying that his church violated the copyright of the Church of the Creator by copying their name and infringing on their registered trademark. (Hale's organization has since been renamed the Creativity Movement)

An injunction was issued on November 19 forbidding Hale's church from using the term "Church of the Creator." Hale's World Church of the Creator was ordered to stop using the name on the Internet and to remove or cover up the phrase "Church of the Creator" on all of Hale's publications and products. In response to this decision, Hale sued Lefkow on December 24, falsely claiming that her order violated the Constitution in requiring the destruction of the group's bibles. Around this time, threats were made against Lefkow on the internet and her home address and family photographs of her husband and children were posted on the Stormfront.org website.

Meanwhile, an undercover FBI informant taped a conversation with Hale where he asked about Lefkow's home address and discussed her impending "extermination". On January 8, 2003, Hale was arrested on charges of plotting to murder Lefkow. The FBI informant in that trial received several death threats, and Lefkow initially was protected by a detail of the United States Marshals Service.

On February 28, 2005, Lefkow returned home to find the bodies of both her husband and mother dead in the basement of her North Side home. According to an anonymous federal source, both Michael F. Lefkow, 64, and Donna Humphrey, 89, had been shot multiple times.

Where does a woman like this find solace. Where does she find peace? Where does she turn? Living an upright life, faithfully carrying out the duties of her office, she experiences terrible heartache and pain.

T.S. Judge Lefkow did what we all must do. . .

 **WE MUST WADE THROUGH THE MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT ADVERSITY AND DISCOVER AN UPRIGHT RESPONSE.**

Job 1:1 In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. 2 He had seven sons and three daughters, 3 and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East.

4 His sons used to take turns holding feasts in their homes, and they would invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. 5 When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would send and have them purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, "Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." This was Job's regular custom.

6 One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them. 7 The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?"

Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it."

8 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."

9 "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. 10 "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. 11 But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face."

12 The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger."

Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

Misconceptions about Adversity

What do you know about Napoleon Bonaparte?

Many believe that he was particularly short.

After his death in 1821, the French emperor's height was recorded as 5 feet 2 inches in French feet. This corresponds to 5 feet 6.5 inches in modern international feet, or 1.686 meters, making him slightly taller than an average Frenchman of the 19th century.

- There are a number of common misconceptions concerning adversity and the follower of God.

God is indifferent to our suffering

1:8 "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."

9 "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. . . . strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face."

12 The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger."

3 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason."

4 "Skin for skin!" Satan replied. "A man will give all he has for his own life. 5 But stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face."

6 The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life."

Prosperity and Righteousness always go together

1:1 In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. 2 He had seven sons and three daughters, 3 and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East.

8 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."

. . . "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby, 15 and the Sabeans attacked and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword,

"The fire of God fell from the sky and burned up the sheep and the servants, . . .

"The Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and swept down on your camels and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, . . .

"Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, 19 when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, . . .

Uprightness, peace and blessing always go together

3 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason."

4 "Skin for skin!" Satan replied. "A man will give all he has for his own life. 5 But stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face."

6 The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life."

God won't give us more than we can handle

It is a cliché. What he will allow may certainly feel like more than we can handle.

Upright Response to Adversity

Worship

1:20 At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship 21 and said:

"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised."

22 In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.

Adversity does not change who God is.

It can change how we are feeling about life, about ourselves, about God.

Adversity does not change his promises.

Therefore, even in adversity Worship can be healing.

Surrender

2:7 So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head. 8 Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes.

Admitting that we cannot change certain things

What has happened cannot be undone.

Admitting that we cannot control future outcomes

Certain events will play out no matter what.

Therefore even in adversity Surrender can lead to peace.

In his book *The Pressure's Off*, psychologist Larry Crabb uses a story from his childhood to illustrate our need to delight in God through adversity:

One Saturday afternoon, I decided I was a big boy and could use the bathroom without anyone's help. So I climbed the stairs, closed and locked the door behind me, and for the next few minutes felt very self-sufficient.

Then it was time to leave. I couldn't unlock the door. I tried with every ounce of my three-year-old strength, but I couldn't do it. I panicked. I felt again like a very little boy as the thought went through my head, "I might spend the rest of my life in this bathroom."

My parents—and likely the neighbors—heard my desperate scream.

"Are you okay?" Mother shouted through the door she couldn't open from the outside. "Did you fall? Have you hit your head?"

"I can't unlock the door!" I yelled. "Get me out of here!"

I wasn't aware of it right then, but Dad raced down the stairs, ran to the garage to find the ladder, hauled it off the hooks, and leaned it against the side of the house just beneath the bedroom window. With adult

strength, he pried it open, then climbed into my prison, walked past me, and with that same strength, turned the lock and opened the door.

"Thanks, Dad," I said—and ran out to play. ¹

That's what we hope happens in our surrender, that God will just come sweeping in and open the door releasing us from the darkness we are trapped in. But more often the scenario is different. It is more like this.

God comes into the dark room in which we are trapped and simply says stop banging on the door. I'm here everything is okay. Sit and and know me in the darkness.

Integrity

2:9 His wife said to him, "Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!"

10 He replied, "You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?"

In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.

It is not uncommon for people to shake their fists at God in the midst of tragedy and suffering.

Nebraska State Senator Ernie Chambers has taken his complaints to court. In October 2007, Sen. Chambers sued God for "causing untold death and horror" in the form of "fearsome floods...horrendous hurricanes, [and] terrifying tornadoes." Furthermore, says the senator, God has wrought "widespread

¹ Larry Crabb, *The Pressure's Off* (WaterBrook Press, 2002); pp. 222-223; submitted by John Beukema, Chambersburg, Pennsylvania

death [and] destruction" and terrorized "millions upon millions of the Earth's inhabitants."²

The challenge in adversity is trusting God to be God.

If we have a poor concept of God, adversity shipwrecks our faith

The challenge in adversity is enduring crisis.

This too will pass

Therefore the defining issue is adversity is all about how we respond to it.

SUMMARY

 **WE MUST WADE THROUGH THE MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT ADVERSITY AND DISCOVER AN UPRIGHT RESPONSE.**

- God is never indifferent to our suffering, but uprightness has never been a guarantee against adversity. We may very well face horribly difficult times even while faithfully following God.
- In times of adversity the upright embrace three response: Worship, Surrender and Integrity.

BENEDICTION

Lord Jesus, may you fill up our lives with the overwhelming reality of your presence, may we know you as you really are, the faithful friend, the ever

² Brandon O'Brien, assistant editor, PreachingToday.com; source: "Neb. state senator sues God in protest" (Associated Press) USA Today (10-08-07)

present one, may our lives discover true uprightness in you. May our lives reflect integrity in the day adversity, when all has gone wrong, when tomorrow seems out of control, may we surrender to you in the darkness, trusting you are there.