

**Sermon Title:**  
**“Faith Expressed Through Clenched Teeth”**  
**Sermon by Dr. Keith Cogburn**  
**Week of November 7, 2010**

**Sermon Based Small Group Discussion Guide**

***Icebreaker:***

Can you recall a time, either from childhood or more recently, when you hoped for something, deep within your bones, despite everything that was going on around you? Where did that hope come from?

***Big Idea:***

True faith in God is not based on our circumstances. Where reason and understanding fall short, absolute trust in God’s goodness and involvement in our life uphold us.

***Study Introduction:***

The Old Testament book of Job, classified as a Wisdom Book, is stylistically a dramatic poem. This book is named for its main character, the patriarch Job, and deals with several universal questions, among them why the righteous suffer. Early in the book, Satan assaulted Job, a wealthy, highly respected community leader. These assaults were allowed by God for the purpose of showing that Job’s devotion to God is grounded in faith and not prosperity, and resulted in the loss of Job’s children, all his possessions, and his health. His wife, offering her best wisdom, told Job to “Curse God and die” (2:9). Then Job’s friends visit to comfort him (Job 2:11-13).

By the time we get to chapter 19, today’s text, we find Job sitting on a dung-heap, scraping his sores with a shard of pottery, engaged in the second of three cycles of debates with his friends over the cause of his suffering. Here is a man in agony, physically and emotionally. Could things get any worse for Job? Yes! Job is also suffering spiritually.

Job, like the other characters introduced in this Old Testament book,

grew up believing that good things happen to good people. They were all aware of the Israelite law that stated, “Fear God, and be blessed.” Conversely, suffering was understood as a clear sign of God’s displeasure. He believed that this was the way the world worked because he believed that this was the nature of God. If people made presented their sacrifices to God and worshiped him, worked hard and cared for their family, then God would prevent anything bad from happening to them. Job had faith that if he held up his end of the bargain, God would, too. But we can see that’s not what happened.

So, in addition to the physical suffering from the boils, on top of the emotional suffering that came from losing his family and everything he’d spent his whole life working for, Job was also suffering because his concept of God, his understanding of the nature of God, is gone. Literally everything Job thought he knew has been proven wrong and perhaps this spiritual suffering was the most painful of all. Sometimes our faith and the reality of our circumstances seem to be in conflict. Yet, in spite of his confusion about his circumstances and what he thought he understood about God, Job repeatedly appealed his case to one who would care, one who could set things to rights. He believed in his own and righteousness in God’s power to intervene.

1. While trying to sort through difficult circumstances, have you experienced poor, but well-meaning, advice from friends or loved ones?
2. What qualities do you look for in a person with whom you will share your doubts, suffering, and the big questions of life?
3. When I go through hard times I tend to (more than 1 could apply):
  - a. Reach out to others as a way of working through issues;
  - b. Share with only a select few that I trust;
  - c. Feel the need to explain my blamelessness;

- d. Hear that I'm defensive from those with whom I'm sharing;
- e. Ignore the problems;
- e. Request prayer support.

**Sermon Text:**

Job 19:23-27a

**23** "Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll, **24** that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever! **25** I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. **26** And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; **27** I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

**Digging Deeper:**

4. Think of some times when it would be very helpful to have someone like this in your corner?

Read Psalm 17:1-3, 6-9, this week's Call to Praise text:

A prayer of David.

**1** Hear me, LORD, my plea is just; listen to my cry. Hear my prayer—it does not rise from deceitful lips. **2** Let my vindication come from you; may your eyes see what is right. **3** Though you probe my heart, though you examine me at night and test me, you will find that I have planned no evil; my mouth has not transgressed.

**6** I call on you, my God, for you will answer me; turn your ear to me and hear my prayer. **7** Show me the wonders of your great love, you who save by your right hand those who take refuge in you from their foes. **8** Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings **9** from the wicked who are out to destroy me, from my mortal enemies who surround me.

5. List every word David and Job used to describe the Lord's actions to his beloved, to those who call on his name in faith.

6. Have you been the recipient of this kind of action toward you from a loving God?

**Taking It Home? (How will I live it? Apply it?):**

7. Have you ever observed someone going through an ordeal with "clenched-teeth" faith? Assuming that this made some impact on you, did it affect the way you deal with hardship? With the way you live out your faith?

8. How would knowing that people were watching the way you deal with hard times make a difference to the way you respond to circumstances?

9. What are the blessings or rewards of faithfulness that flow to those who cling to God by faith in hard times?

**Prayer Requests and Praises:**