

**REPENTING FOR NOTHING**  
**A Devotional Meditation from**  
**Job 13:15-16, 41:1-34, 42:5-6; Isaiah 14:12-15, 27:1; 53:1-12; Ezekiel 28:11-19;**  
**Philippians 2:1-11; Hebrews 5:8-8; Revelation 12:1-17**

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Of all the dreadful beasts prowling about our collective human consciousness, the most dreadful is the dragon. Even the good dragons are dreadful – although “good” is a relative term. The dragon may bring good fortune according to some stories, but it still has long fangs and sharp claws at the very least. Of course, the dragons that come most often into our stories and imaginations are the ones with wings that fan a hurricane, tails that level buildings, and flaming breath that incinerates everything in its path. They may work with humans to achieve some common goal, but dragons can never be tamed, and can never, ever be considered servants, pets, or property of mere humans.



Princess Tamatori retrieves a precious pearl from the Dragon King in this illustration of the medieval tale *Taishokkan*. (Vignette from [The Great Woven Cap](#), Edo Period (1615-1868) Japan, Metropolitan Museum of Art.)

Again, “good” is a relative term when describing dragons. Usually they are evil, wicked, selfish, and destructive. They use their powerful attributes to steal, kill, and destroy. What they steal they keep for themselves, often stockpiling their treasures in caves or other places they can guard easily. They create nothing, and they use none of what they acquire, except perhaps to lure others into their service as minions to acquire more loot for their trove, or as food – or perhaps as both.

But are dragons real? One certainly is. That would be Satan, the great adversary of God and of humanity. It should be no surprise that John the Revelator names him as the Dragon who led one-third of the angels in rebellion against the Creator, and who was cast out of heaven to wreak havoc on the earth (Revelation 12). It may be that this celestial Dragon is the source of all the dragon myths and lore in civilizations across the planet. The biblical description certainly fits that lore. We find it in Job 41, where the Dragon is called Leviathan and takes the form of a sea serpent. Some would say it's not a real dragon, but perhaps a crocodile, a dinosaur, or some other less fanciful beast. Even if that is so, the metaphor of a dragon works perfectly to convey the nature of our adversary. Consider this from Job's account:

I will not keep silent about his [Leviathan's] limbs, or his might or the grace of his arrangement.

Who can strip off his outer garment? Who can penetrate his double armor?

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\* David Altman's observation about Job's repentance is the inspiration for this devotional thought.

Who can open the doors of his face, ringed with fearsome teeth?  
His rows of shields are his pride, shut up closely as with tight seal;  
each so close to the next, that no air can pass between.  
They are joined one to another; they clasp each other and cannot be separated.  
He sneezes out flashes of light; his eyes are like the eyelids of dawn.  
Out of his mouth go flames, sparks of fire shoot out.  
Smoke pours from his nostrils, as a boiling pot over burning reeds.  
His breath sets coals ablaze and flames dart from his mouth.  
Strength resides in his neck; dismay runs before him.  
The folds of his flesh are tightly joined; they are firm on him, immovable.  
His heart is hard as rock, hard as a lower millstone.  
When he rises up, the mighty are afraid; at his crashing they retreat.  
A sword that reaches him has no effect—nor with a spear, dart, or javelin.  
He regards iron as straw, bronze as rotten wood.  
Arrows do not make him flee; sling stones become like chaff to him.  
A club is regarded as stubble; he laughs at the rattling of a lance.  
His undersides are jagged potsherds, leaving a trail like a threshing sledge in mud.  
He makes the deep boil like a cauldron and stirs up the sea like a pot of ointment.  
He leaves a shining wake behind him; one would think the deep had white hair.  
Nothing on dry land is his equal—a creature without fear.

Job 41:12-33 (4-25) TLV

This is the Dragon that we fear. Yet though he may be the most powerful being on earth, he is no match for the Creator. That is what God explains to Job, and what we learn as well from Isaiah –

In that day *ADONAI* will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent with His fierce, great, strong sword, Leviathan the twisted serpent! He will slay the dragon in the sea.

Isaiah 27:1 TLV

If that is the Dragon's fate, why should we fear him?

Perhaps because he is also the Dragon we seek to imitate. This is another lesson from Job. The description of Leviathan is the last part of a long speech God delivers to Job in which He explains just how powerful He is – and just how small and weak Job is. When the Creator finishes speaking, Job humbly confesses,

I had heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye has seen You.  
Therefore I despise myself, and repent on dust and ashes.

Job 42:5-6 TLV

But why does Job repent? Even in the midst of his terrible suffering, he never sins against God (Job 1:22, 2:10), and God Himself says Job had spoken rightly about Him, and that He found Job acceptable (Job 42:7-8). What need did he have for repentance?

Great need, actually. Righteous, blameless Job learned something dismaying about himself: that he still had a root of pride within his heart. The root manifested in Job's assertion of his innocence, and his demand to argue his case before God. He was within his rights to do so, for he was innocent, but by standing on those rights he played into the hands of the adversary. That's why the Creator had to give such a detailed description of

Leviathan. But even all those fearsome details about the Dragon might not have registered with Job had God not concluded His description with these words –

He sees every haughty thing; he is king over all who are proud.

Job 41:34(26) TLV

There it is: Leviathan, Satan, the Dragon, is king over every person who holds on to any form of pride – even the innocuous pride of defending oneself against unjust accusation. The hope of vindicating oneself leads inexorably to self-justification, and if left unchecked, brings us to that place where Lucifer embraced iniquity and fell from grace.

This is where Job learned that the only creature on earth more powerful than the Dragon is the Lamb. Again, Isaiah explains it to us –

We all like sheep have gone astray.  
Each of us turned to his own way.  
So *ADONAI* has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.  
He was oppressed and He was afflicted  
yet He did not open His mouth.  
Like a lamb led to the slaughter,  
like a sheep before its shearers is silent,  
so He did not open His mouth.

Isaiah 53:6-7 TLV

This is why Messiah had to be the Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world. If He had to be silent before His accusers as they spoke abominable lies about Him, then so should we. If He had to learn obedience by the unjust things He suffered, so must we. If He had to be obedient even to death, so should we.

The Dragon clings to life, grasping until the end for a way to make it his own.

The Lamb surrenders His life, knowing that the death of His free will brings resurrection to the Source of life in the Creator.

Here is where Job's life foretells Messiah's work. God had given him the opportunity to do just what he asked: to defend himself before the Almighty. Yet when God interrogated him, Job found no grounds to answer. Thus Job gave up his free will, surrendering entirely to the will of the Creator. That is Job's repentance and commitment to a change of behavior.

In the end, Job didn't repent for nothing; he repented for living in a way that suggested, however humbly and subtly, that his will mattered more than his Maker's.