

JOB ; A MAN OF FAITH AMIDST SUFFERING

JOB 5: JOB IS RESTORED

Read Job 42.

We have been working through the book of Job in a series recently and today we come to the conclusion of this.

Just to summarise the story so far;

Job was a wealthy farmer, with thousands of livestock and blessed with a large family. Then Satan the Accuser, came before God claiming that Job was only trusting God because he was wealthy and blessed, and so, the testing of Job began. Satan was allowed by God to destroy Job's livestock, his house, his servants and worst of all - his children, but Job continued to trust God. Then Satan attacked Job physically, being covered in painful sores from head to toe. Job's wife even told him to "curse God and die" (Job 2: 9), but Job suffered in silence.

Then Job's 3 so called friends enter the scene, at first grieving silently with Job, but Job's troubles intensified when they, well, spoke! They told Job that the reasons for Job's tragedies were because of his sin. This theology is called "retributive justice", you are suffering, therefore you must have sinned. This highlights one of the key themes of Job, the debate between "Traditional wisdom (of Job's friends) v "True Wisdom". They told him to confess his sins and turn back to God, but Job maintained his innocence.

Job though grapples with his suffering, his doubt, the sovereignty of God, his despair, and even began to question God's control and care. Finally, as we reflected on last time God spoke out of a mighty storm, with His majesty, His power and His sovereignty. This caused Job to fall in humble reverence to God, speechless.

Unlike their counterparts today, Christians of a bygone era prepared themselves for trouble, they expected it. They anticipated the discipline of the cross throughout their earthly lives - until the grave. They understood that pain only dissipates in heaven. The entrance into God's kingdom is strewn with days of tribulation and some of it can be intense. It is what Paul longed to know when he referred to "*the fellowship of sharing in Christ's sufferings*" (Philippians 3: 10). This is one of the interpretive keys of the book of Job, as well as the profound

mysteries of how God's providence affects our lives. So let us now reflect on how the book concludes, and how we can apply it to our lives today.

So first of all, Job's 3 friends:

Job's friends had made the error of assuming that Job's suffering was caused by some great sin! They were judging Job without knowing what God was doing. We must be so careful, if we have learned one thing in the study of this book it is that we must not make judgements about a person because God may be working in ways we know nothing about. The friends have been convinced of their own rightness, their own "self-righteousness, but God challenges them; Job 42: 7, "I am angry with you". Their contribution has been folly and the contrast here is between "wisdom" and "foolishness". Job has been the wise one throughout and God rebukes them in the they have "not been right in what you say about me".

In Romania, with Carpathian Aid's ministry "Common Ground", we are continually seeking to correct people's thinking, and sometimes sadly, the theology of Pastors, who bring their own judgement into situations of people with disabilities.

The friend's have been scornful of Job from the beginning, and now they discover that the only way of delivery from God's anger towards them - is Job's prayerful intervention on their behalf. And then Job is affirmed.

"For you have not been right in what you say about me, as my servant Job has"

Job 42: 7.

God affirms Job, I wonder how many of us would like that same affirmation as Job from the Lord?

And now, after receiving so much criticism from his 3 "friends", Job was asked to do a very difficult thing. He was asked by God to make an offering for his 3 friends sin - AND TO PRAY FOR THEM, AYE RIGHT, GOOD ONE!! After all his friends had done to him, he had to offer a sacrifice for them and pray for them!

Again, though Job shows us his character, with grace in his heart, he showed them forgiveness, and as he does this, Job is restored.

What we have to notice at this point though is that Job is asked to do this without any knowledge that he would be restored!! He had to do it UN-CONDITIONALLY!! At this point we have to ask ourselves, are we able to pray for those who have hurt you, are we truly able to forgive them, be reconciled?? Do we harbour unforgiveness in our hearts, or will we like the example of Job today, and indeed how Jesus acts towards us - offer UNCONDITIONAL, COMPLETE FORGIVENESS??

And so Job is restored, we find this in Job 42: 10 - 17. Job is now vindicated in front of his friends. His fortune is restored in double measure. Hope, joy, and life are returned in abundance. And what is a major lesson that we can learn from the character of Job? He testified that life is lived best when offered humbly and submissively to God, whatever pains he chooses to send our way. Our restoration may or may not be like Job, spiritual and material, however if we trust in the grace of God, God will give us the blessing of His peace, and the sense of His presence in whatever circumstance.

So what can we learn from this passage today?

- 1. The Christian life will be marked with suffering, it is a way that God forms character and faith.**

Through this trial Job had come face to face with God. What Job had known of God in the past was of friendship and of fellowship, now through what Job has been through - He continued to trust God, although we saw that he had many, many questions.

Read 1 Peter 1: 6 - 7.

And what does this do for Job - A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF GOD - FACE TO FACE!!!

"My ears had heard of you,

But now my eyes have seen you."

Job 42: 5

What a verse!!! Maybe, Job did not receive the answer he was looking for or expected, but he also received the experience he did not expect and that he would never forget. Job now knew God better than he did before. (Read Matthew 25: 37 - 46 for more on how Jesus, God present themselves through suffering people)

2. In suffering we should not focus on the cause, all we can control is our response.

The cause of Job's suffering is a much a mystery at the end for Job, as it was in the beginning. What we have to carefully note from this book, is that Job is never given an explanation for the cause of his suffering. We see it because we get the whole story, the big picture, but this is never given to Job.

The thing that has changed is his ATTITUDE. If we are being touched by God's Holy Spirit through this study, one of the main things to accept is:

When suffering comes, and is around us. There is only one thing that we can control - our response to the situation, not trying to work out where it came from and why? I have been inspired listening to many people's stories of their suffering, and taking this very stance. Not "Why", but "Why not" not "Why me", but "Use me for your glory".

3. The major theme of the book though is faith in the midst of suffering and what would be the best evidence of this?

ALL THE WAY THROUGH JOB'S FRIENDS TALKED ABOUT GOD, "THIS IS OUR OPINION JOB OF HOW GOD IS JUDGING YOU,

BUT JOB KEPT TALKING TO GOD

- IN THE LAMENT - HE TALKED TO GOD!
- IN THE QUESTIONS AND HIS DESPAIR - HE TALKED TO GOD!
- EVEN WHEN HE WENT TOO FAR - HE WAS STILL TALKING, COMMUNICATING WITH GOD,

WHAT A TESTIMONY!

A husband/wife must have intimacy in their marriage, to sustain it and develop it. To do this the communication lines must always be worked on;

- To voice their concerns
- To ask questions, "What is happening this week?" "What is happening tomorrow?" "How was your day?"
- To spend time together.

- To develop our relationships, we must communicate.

In the most important relationship of all, with God, our loving heavenly Father, we must communicate, we must be open, we must be honest, and like Job even if we go slightly wrong, to say sorry. God will forgive us.

God will give us His peace, sometimes not UNDERSTANDING, no answer on the reason of the suffering may come, but if we ask Him and seek Him, with all of our hearts - Peace will come.

PEACE IS VERY DIFFERENT FROM UNDERSTANDING, YOU SEE PEACE IS SOMETHING THAT HAPPENS - EVEN ALTHOUGH WE DO NOT UNDERSTAND, AND IT CAN ONLY COME FROM GOD. AS WE READ IN PHILIPPIANS 4: 6 - 7;

*“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. AND THE PEACE OF GOD WHICH TRANSCENDS ALL **UNDERSTANDING** will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”*

The peace that passes all understanding - comes from being in relationship to Christ - communicating every day in talkative prayer - every moment with your redeemer.

4. **And from where does this relationship come from?**

Job says, in the middle of the story, after his suffering and before God talks to him,

“I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVES”

Job 19: 25.

Job has discovered the secret of life - KNOWING JESUS, THE REDEEMER, in Job’s case only in type and shadow.

May that be all of our experience that comes from this time spent in the book of Job. The wonderful presence of the Lord Jesus. If for the first time, that is your experience today, then let that be your prayer. “I WANT TO KNOW JESUS, I WANT TO KNOW MY JESUS, MY REDEEMER, I KNOW MY REDEEMER LIVES AND I WANT TO KNOW HIM!” and as I get to know him, I will receive the peace that passes all understanding.

“The fear of the Lord,

Is the beginning of knowledge.”

Proverbs 1: 7

May we all fear the Lord, live humbly, be aware of our smallness compared to God's greatness, and like Job communicate in intimate relationship with him, and that as we do this - we shall bring him all the glory, honour and praise. For His sake. Amen.

Gary Torbet

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