

THE BOOK OF JOB PT 2.

Intro. Story of a professor who filled in the exam for the students and gave them all an A. At the bottom of the exam it said the following. "This is the end of the final exam. All the answers on your test are correct. You will receive an A on the final exam. The reason you passed the test is that the creator of the test took it for you. All the work you did in preparation for this test did not help you get the A. You have just experienced grace."

The professor went to say : " I have tried to teach you that you are the recipients of grace. I have tried to tell you that you need to demonstrate this gift when you work with young people. Don't hammer them. Help them, for they will carry on your ministry if it is full of grace."

We as Christians have been recipients of God's grace. And so all we do should be permeated with grace. And yet so often we show a lack of grace to those who are struggling, those who have addiction, those who have messed up.

And as we come to pt 2 of the book of Job, we are about to see Job's 3 friends show an appalling lack of grace towards their friend. We see a good man, Job who is suddenly and inexplicably struck with terrible tragedy. His wealth is wiped out. His 10 children are killed. And he ends up with a debilitating illness. Dramatic turn around in his life.

3 friends come and visit and are appalled at the sight of him. They sit with him in silence for 7 days. Ch 4-37, are a series of speeches written in poetry form.

Eliphaz Speech 1 Job replies Bildad Speech 1 Job replies Zophar Speech 1 Job replies
Eliphaz Speech 2 Job replies Bildad Speech 2 Job replies Zophar Speech 2 Job replies
Eliphaz speech 3 Job replies Bildad Speech 3 Job replies Zophar drops out at this point.. (he is the harshest)
Elihu. (We are not sure where he comes from. He is the only one who speaks much sense. At the end he is not reprimanded by God.)

Eliphaz appeals to his experience , , Bildad appeals to tradition Zophar just assumes. The speeches get angrier and harsher as they continue. The main thrust of the argument is the same for all 3. People get what they deserve. God is disciplining you. You must have done something wrong. You need to confess this and put it right. God is just and so we should expect that those who follow him will experience justice. Examples 5:17 8:4 11:14

It is very easy for us to fall into this kind of theology. Ie " I don't deserve this. " That is a theology that says the we get what we deserve in life so God is punishing me. God has bought this suffering into my life because he is not happy with me. I am not good enough. It is reinforced by Old Testament theology that is rehashed as prosperity doctrine preaching in many churches today. God has good things for your life. As you follow him, he will bring blessings into you

life. He will bless you with good health, with a good job, with a family, with a spouse, with possessions.

In the OT, under the old covenant, God did promise health and prosperity for the nation of Israel if they obeyed him. It is not found in the New Testament. The blessings promised to believers here are spiritual blessings with a physical and material blessing to come in the age to come.

If you sit under this teaching and absorb this prosperity stuff, the opposite has also to be true. If you not being blessed with God health and finances, then you must be disobeying God. That is the logical conclusion – you need to try harder.

Job in his speeches points out that observation of life shows this is not right. Some bad people seem to do very well. It doesn't line up with what we can observe.

When Job insists he is innocent the tone of the debate gets nasty. They resort to calling him names, to saying he is proud, he is stupid, he is ignorant. When Job protests his innocence they start falsely accusing him of suff. Examples 15:1 Eliphaz 18:2 Bilad Ch 22:5 7 9

Lastly we see Elihu. Elihu makes 4 speeches that are very long winded.

Ch 33 God is speaking. V14 There is a truth here. God does speak and it can be through pain. But in pain we can also hear falsehoods from friends or Satan saying God has left us.

Ch 34 He treats people as they deserve because he is just. He is on the dangerous ground here

Ch 35 Tells Job he is a fool. God is silent because of pride. Not helpful to someone in deep grief.

Ch 36:22 – 37 The greatness of God. God is beyond our understanding. Much better argument that acts as a segway to God's response.

What do we do with these chapters.. They are hard work. 3 lessons from these chapters

We need to be so careful with our words as we speak to those in deep pain

We can so easily come across as arrogant. We cannot understand another persons' pain. And our spouting theology to those in pain, about why God allows suffering is not helpful. In fact it can make things worse. His friends show pride as they try to shame Job.

We can so easily make assumptions. His friends made lots of assumptions, and accusations; that he was harbouring some sin, that he had mistreated people, that he was hiding from truth. It is very easy to make assumptions about other peoples lives and to blame them for what is happening. But we don't know the details of their lives or what they have lived through. We often think the worst of others rather than the best.



We can so easily make things black and white when they are not. If we have not experienced deep pain in our life, it is so easy to make out theology to be black and white. But the older we get, the more we begin to realize that things are not black and white. As we get older we are happier to live with mystery. To say, I don't really know.

We can so easily wound with our words. And when we are suffering, the words of others can so easily wound us more deeply. Never assume that we can understand another person's situation. Never assume that there will be a happy ending. Never speak words if they don't encourage and build up. There is a place to speak truth in love, but it is not normally when someone is suffering. Anyone can demolish a building. But it takes skill to build a building. It's the same with us. Very easy to tear down a person. But a lot more care is needed to build up.

Lesson 2. God does not have a wonderful plan (on earth) for everyone

How many times have you heard the verse quoted. For I know the plans I have for you says the Lord, They are plans for good, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. Jer 29:11 Now there is nothing wrong with this verse per se. But it was given to the Israelites when they were in captivity, promising them the future was going to be better. It is not a blanket promise that life is going to be good.

For many, the answer to their request for healing is going to be NO. For some it will be a life of heart break and suffering For some it will be a degenerative disease that ends their life at 20 For some it will be intense persecution and homelessness. The God of the Bible includes the lives of people who do not get well, or overcome their problems, who do not get over their issues. The Bible is full of people who hurt, fail, and who sometimes by God's grace succeed.

Larry Crabb Christian writer says this: "We seem more interested in managing life into a comfortable existence than in letting God spiritually transform us through lives hardships."

Another writer says. "Perhaps we should begin entering the suffering, participating insofar as we are able, entering the mystery and looking around for God. We need to quit feeling sorry for people who suffer and instead look up to them, learn from them and if they will let us, join them in protest and prayer."

Please note. God's ultimate plan is wonderful God's eternal plan is that we live in no pain, with him, for eternity.

Lesson 3. Be like Job and refuse to give up on God

There is an old saying "to have the patience of Job" Job is a hero of the faith because he refused to give up on God. He cried out to God and God for a long time was silent. He vented to God. But he refused to reject God.

Job 19:25. (many songs inspired by these words) Job 9:33 (fulfilled in Jesus Christ see . 1 Timothy 2:5 Job 23:8-10

This is the kind of commitment we need to make before we come to the tough times. That we will choose to walk in integrity no matter what happens. We have become luke warm Christians who often at the first sign of suffering say. "I am not going to go to church any more. If this is what happens when you follow God then I am out of here."

Sometimes that drop from church is because the church have been like Jobs's friends. They have spouted platitudes and not entered into the persons' confusion and grief. They have tried to give black and white answers when there are no black and white answers.

Job said. I am going to press into the word of God even more. I am not going to turn away. I don't understand. God is silent. I think I have a case against God. But I am not going to turn away.

Every Christian is going to face a season when God seems silent and life seems deeply unfair. Are we prepared for the fact that others might accuse us and not support us. Are we prepared for the fact that our life here might not have a nice resolution. That God's plan for our life might involve suffering and hardship.

Jesus never sugar coated things. He didn't say. Come to me and you will lead a great and happy life. He said,. You are going to have to take up cross to follow me. You will be persecuted for following me. People will hate you,. Falsely accuse you. You will be rejected by your own family. There will be suffering from Wars, famines, earthquakes. The one thing Jesus did promise ius. NO matter what we go through in this life. I will be with you. I will never leave you.

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REFLECTION + DISCUSSION

Have you been on the receiving end of friends well meaning but hurtful comments during tough times? How did you react?

What Can we say to someone in deep pain?

What is your reaction to the statement " God does not have a wonderful plan (on earth) for everyone?

Discuss Larry Crabb's quote. Do you think it is true?

Why is a false gospel in the West so prevalent and appealing today? Why would such a gospel be laughed at in other parts of the world?

What can help prepare us for the tough times, so that we can have Job's deep commitment to hang in with God regardless?

If Jesus promises to never leave us, how come in tough times God often can feel absent? How do we reconcile this?



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