

Out of the Storm

A Study of Job

Part 5 – “False Comfort vs. Faithful Questioning”

Job 4-7

Main Idea: A theology that rests on our own piety and righteousness is ultimately condemning. The only hope we have is in the righteousness that comes through faith in God's provision for us, namely his Son, Jesus Christ.

False Comfort (Chapter 4 & 5)

1. Truth is given but misapplied.
 - a. Theological truth
 - i. God is in control (5:8-11)
 - ii. God is just (5:12-16)
 - iii. God blesses His people (5:17-26)
 - b. Theological error
 - i. He did not understand the scope of the spiritual battle.
 1. We neglect deeper spiritual understanding when we try to equate suffering and judgment with specific sin. (John 9 – who sinned?)
 2. God's glory is at stake. Is he worthy to be worshipped just because he is God?
 - ii. He encourages Job to place confidence in his own piety and righteousness (4:6).
 - iii. He assumes God's judgment is immediate. He had no long term perspective (4:6-9).
 1. This perspective sounds good. It is even echoed in Proverbs 13:21, “Disaster pursues sinners but the righteous are rewarded with good.”
 2. Be careful not to take general statements and make them absolutes in every situation.
 3. True blessing and final judgment are not always immediate. Scripture gives us the big picture to help us understand what seems to be present injustice (Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43).
2. This “truth” is lacking the centrality of the cross and therefore lacks any true comfort or hope.
 - a. Eliphaz has no category for an innocent person that suffers (4:7).
 - i. Eliphaz, (and his friends), believe that if a righteous person were to ever suffer it would muddy the moral order of things.
 - ii. What Job sets up for us however is the category of the innocent sufferer.
 - b. Eliphaz asks Job who he will call to on his behalf (5:1).
 - i. In Eliphaz's wisdom the heavens are silent. There is no mediator.
 - ii. And yet Job sets us up for the understanding of the righteous who live by faith in God's provision of a mediator.
 - c. The wisdom of the world cannot comprehend the message of an innocent sufferer.
 - i. The wisdom of Eliphaz and his friends is turned into foolishness (5:13; 1 Cor. 1:20-25).

Faithful Questioning (Chapters 6 & 7)

1. We see why the “comfort” of his friend was not comforting.
 - a. The depth of Job’s despair - vexation – a tiring anger that drains us of energy for living and can make us depressed (6:1)
 - i. If you could weigh his calamity it would be heavier than the sea (6:3).
 - ii. The reason for his despair was not solely his great loss but ultimately arrows from God (v. 4). He is experiencing the wrath of God that is focused on him.
 - b. The inedible diet of his friends’ words – (6:5-7)
 - i. What is unbearable is to suffer the wrath of God and be given neat religious explanations.
 - ii. Job rebukes his friends for withholding kindness (6:14).
 - iii. The reason their “comfort” was so disappointing is that there can be no true comfort or hope apart from the true Living Water that God offers us through our mediator, Jesus Christ.
 - c. Job’s main concern is not his piety but rather staying faithful to God.
 - i. He would rather die than curse God. (6:10)
 - ii. He is honoring God not because of circumstances but simply because He is God. It is a foreshadowing of Christ’s obedience in suffering. Christ was obedient to the will of the Father precisely because God’s glory was at stake.
2. We witness a godly man crying out to God in anguish and honesty.
 - a. Why do I matter?
 - i. He compares himself to one who has been conscripted to serve and as a slave and hired hand longing for the shadows of night.
 - ii. He mentions the paradox of suffering – slow and agonizing pain but at the same time the rapid slipping away of life itself (7:3-6).
 - iii. He laments that he is insignificant (7:7-10).
 - b. Leave me alone!
 - i. In his anguish he speaks out. He can’t keep silent. This is one of the signs of hope in Job. He speaks and questions well. (7:11)
 - ii. Job’s protest – if I am so insignificant why do you pay so much attention to me? (7:17-20)
 - iii. He ends with a good question. He acknowledges his own sin knowing that only in God can his sins be pardoned. “Why do you not pardon my transgression and take away my iniquity?” (7:21)
3. This only makes sense as we view his suffering in light of Jesus.
 - a. Job is crying out for God to remove His wrath and to pardon his sins. He does not appeal to his own morality or righteousness but to God to cleanse him.
 - b. Job offers us a glimpse of a man faithfully questioning God in the midst of feeling abandoned and under judgment. This foreshadows the work of the true innocent sufferer on our behalf.
 - c. We see Jesus grapple with these same circumstances:
 - i. The cup of judgment (Matt. 26:39)
 - ii. The isolation and abandonment on the cross (Matt. 27:46)
 - d. And yet Jesus was obedient even to the point of death, satisfying the wrath of God once and for all. And rising from the dead he provides true comfort and hope for God’s people as we suffer and groan and eagerly wait for the day when all things are made right.