

Job's Dark and Confused Heart

Job 3:1-26

As we turn to Job 3, we find Job at the lowest point of his life. In the first two chapters of Job, we have interacted with the narrative (or story) of Job and for the next several chapters we are going to deal with the aftermath of that narrative. Job is in a very dark place and what we get is a peak into a very private moment that ultimately centers on the question why. We don't necessarily get an answer to that question but the reaction of Job's dark and confused heart provide some direction for us. Specifically they reveal:

- How we are to handle our own trials.
- How intentional our lives as Christ followers are to be.

In Job 1:1-12 we are shown the prosperity of Job and in Job 1:13-2:10 we are shown the testing of Job. As we enter into Job 3, we see the confusion of Job.

Prosperity – Testing – Confusion

Job's theology seems to rest on the idea that God blesses the righteous and punishes the wicked. We see this theology elsewhere in Scripture as well. Psalm 1 is just one example. In the big picture (on an eternal scale), this theology is exactly right. God will bless the righteous and the wicked will be reserved for judgment. However, in a fallen world (on a temporal scale) things don't always shake out this way. From an earthly standpoint, each of our own lives can attest to the fact that we have seen wicked people prosper and righteous people suffer. We have a hard time making sense of this and Job is no different as his comments in chapter 3 make this clear.

I. Cursing the Darkness (v.1-10)

This section begins with the phrase "after this." Job has seen all of his wealth, his servants, and his family (children dead and wife cursing God) lost. Job leaves the city and settles in the trash dump outside of its gates or boundary. It is here that he sits alone, try to comfort himself in his pitiful state.

In Job 2:11-13, we see three of Job's friends come on the scene. Word has traveled of Job's calamity and they have come to investigate. Scripture says they made an appointment together which simply means they got together and decided to come visit Job. Job was in such disarray and diseased that these three men did not initially recognize him. This led them to weep and mourn alongside Job. They could see with their own eyes how the mighty Job had been struck down.

We are going to study these three friends and their interactions with Job in greater detail in the coming weeks but look at how their actions are described in 2:13

These guys often get a bad wrap but there is some nobility in them as they are willing to sit and mourn with Job for seven days and nights without saying a word. They only speak after Job breaks the silence.

A couple things are going on here

A. They more than likely don't know what to say. We have all been in that situation.

B. Sometimes Christian ministry to those in grief is nothing more than the willingness to sit alongside someone in their difficulty. There is nothing to say, it is just healthy to mourn.

After seven days, Job finally breaks the silence and what we see exposed is a dark and confused heart. Job is heartbroken. He has lost everything.

It is interesting to note here that the Hebrew in this passage is noted as being some of the most difficult Hebrew to translate and make sense of. This makes complete sense because what we are reading is in some sense the babbling of a man who doesn't know what to say. He doesn't know how to make sense of what he is experiencing. It is as pure, open, and honest of a passage that has ever been written.

Job's entire speech in chapter three can be broken down into two main thoughts. The first on display in verses 1-10 is Job's wish that he had never been born. Specifically Job says, "let the day perish on which I was born." In other words, he wishes God could go back in time and erase that day. It is as if Job is saying "Erase me!"

These are strong words. Think about the moment a child is born. That is a time that is celebrated. Verse 3 describes this moment as it describes the night saying "A man is conceived." The modern way of saying this would be "It's a boy!"

Job says, let that day be darkness, there is nothing to celebrate. It needs to not exist. It needs to go away because if that were the case, the hurt I experience today and everyday forward would not exist. This is a somewhat selfish perspective but it is the true raw emotion of Job's heart.

He goes on to say that day should be cursed. He is ready to rouse up Leviathan. Leviathan is a giant sea creature that swallows up things whole. Possibly a dinosaur? Job is saying, let that monster swallow up the day I was born so it never existed.

He continues by saying don't let the light ever shine on that day – no one should ever see that day because all it has brought me is this trouble.

You can feel Job's deep pain experienced by the loss of his children and property. However, perhaps the greatest pain that Job is experiencing is brought on by the fact that in the midst of this Job doesn't sense the presence of God. He feels abandoned and it doesn't make sense to him. He has been a righteous man and he isn't supposed to be experiencing this.

Knowing what I know now and feeling what I feel now, How can the day of my birth be considered a good thing? I wish I had never been born!

Job's heart is confused, he is in a dark place, and he is cursing that darkness.

II. Questioning the Darkness (11-26)

Job's second main thought is on display in verses 11-26. His wish that the day he had been born never exist is not rational. It is an impossible request. His birth cannot be undone. Perhaps realizing this, Job now openly shares the thought that he wishes he would just die.

This thought is centered on the question why. Once again, Job doesn't understand what is going on. In his mind this shouldn't be happening but he also appears to have the thought that if I just understood why, maybe my situation would be easier to deal with. While that thought is a lie, we have all felt that way.

In this passage, Job asks the question "Why" five times!

- Why did I not die at birth?
- Why did my mother receive me?
- Why was I not stillborn at birth?
- Why do those in misery live?
- Why does God imprison a man who has lost his way?

Job is miserable and simply wants a way out of his misery. He asks valid questions. We have all wondered why miserable people continue to suffer. How does it make sense?

Job longs for death because he sees it as a way out. Now, it is important to note that Job still recognizes God's complete sovereignty. This is not a passage that condones suicide. Job never once considers this path. He recognizes that God is both the giver and taker of life. Death is not for him to decide. God must decide that it is time for his death, he simply longs for that decision to be made.

Verse 24 is interesting because it provides a pretty clear picture of the extent of Job's suffering. Even the act of eating is painful. Everything hurts. He is diseased with no end in sight and has lost everything that he possessed – everywhere he turns is pain – physical and emotional. Make it stop!

In verse 25, we are made privy that Job has previously thought about this day. He has imagined these things as the worst possible thing that could happen to him and now that day is here. He is living a nightmare and is not at ease nor does he see any path to ease on the horizon. He cannot find any sense of peace because of the situation he finds himself in.

Job not only curses the darkness but he questions it as well. Why is this happening to me? It makes no sense! While this is a tough passage of scripture and a tough scenario for Job, there are some important lessons for us to take from it.

III. Personal Implications

A. How do we minister to those grieving

As we saw with Job's three friends, sometimes we can minister to others while saying nothing at all. Situations like Job's, though those that we encounter cannot compare, are quite awkward. Job is sitting on a trash heap in a state of misery. He has been so afflicted by disease and so ravaged by his own emotions that his friends do not recognize him. We are told that they see him from afar. Imagine that scene and think about your own life.

How many of you have seen someone from afar and walked the other way? Maybe you are in a hurry? I know I have done this in a store before simply because I was busy, had things to do, and didn't feel like spending valuable time in a conversation with someone else. Now imagine that same scenario, seeing someone from afar, in a situation revolving tragedy and grief. Maybe in today's setting, we simply hear of someone in that situation. Does the awkwardness of that moment cause us to turn in the other

direction? Often we are confronted with questions such as what would I say? Maybe we attempt to justify our behavior by saying “I don’t want to be a bother.” Job’s three friends were in that same situation. They had the opportunity to say the same things, but they didn’t. They were willing to wade through and place themselves in the midst of awkwardness for their friend.

The truth is they didn’t know what to say and many times we don’t either but that doesn’t mean we cannot minister. In times such as these, we can minister with simply our presence. As believers we are called to share the love of Christ and that is impossible to do when we only act according to convenience.

We must be willing to wade through and place ourselves in awkward and uncomfortable moments if we are to minister to those in need.

B. It’s ok to curse and question the darkness

The third chapter of Job is difficult to read. Job’s speech is uncomfortable and may cause us to question Job. However, what it resembles is an honest and broken heart. Job is in a dark place and in his discomfort he curses and questions the darkness. It is completely natural for an individual to dislike affliction and to question the difficulties in their lives – especially when it does not appear that one has brought the situation upon himself. There are multiple examples in Scripture of the laments of the heart. The Psalms are full of them and there is even a book called Lamentations that is completely dedicated to them! Even more interesting is the fact that many scholars believe that some of the Bible’s most notable laments were modeled after the lament of Job that we have read today. These include:

- Lamentations 3:1-20
- Jeremiah 20:14
- Ezekiel 30:14-18, 32:7-9

It is natural for the heart to lament and Scripture tells us that God hears the cries of His people. What we can learn from Job’s example is that it is okay to curse the darkness and it is ok to question the darkness.

It is important to recognize that at no point did Job question or accuse God of wrongdoing. Job did not attempt to insert his own “better” plan. He simply expressed the honest conditions of his heart before His God. God longs to hear from His people and He desires our honesty. It is healthy and acceptable before God for us to lament in our difficulties. Too often, we want to lament to someone else first. Job didn’t unload on his friends when they showed up. He mourned and shared his concerns before God.

C. While grief can be paralyzing, it shouldn’t cause us to forget the blessings of God

Job himself told his wife in 2:10 that God had the authority and the means to deliver both good and evil. However, as evident by Job’s misery in Ch. 3, hard times can paralyze us both physically and mentally. Job curses the day he was born and wishes he could die and in the midst of that it appears as though his emotions of grief overpowered any possible recognition of the blessings God had bestowed upon him. We have the tendency to do the same. However, we must attempt to not forget the blessings and good times that God had provided us.

Take for example the following two scenarios.

A parent who loses a child or a spouse who spent many good years with their husband/wife before things turned south and led to divorce or abandonment. In both of those questions what would be the common response if we asked either individual if they could go back and live it all over again, would you?

In most cases an individual would say yes because the times of blessing in those relationships prior to tragedy are of immense value. They are a gift from God that must not be forgotten. In the midst of pain that can be difficult to do but we must make every effort to recognize God's blessing on our lives in both good times and bad.

D. What does suffering accomplish

In Job 3:23, Job essentially asks why individuals suffer. The book itself presupposes the question, why do righteous people suffer? What could it possibly accomplish?

While the book itself never truly answers that question, it does provide us with some insight into the value of suffering.

Every situation of suffering will provide an individual with the opportunity to either run to God or run from God. That alone gives some value to suffering. In Job's case, he reacted to his suffering by running to God. Ultimately, his incident strengthens his faith.

While this subject alone could be studied at length, the story of Job reveals to us that suffering can indeed accomplish a purpose. God can and does use our suffering for multiple reasons and we would be wise to remember that. The words of Joseph in Genesis 50:20 should remind us that what we perceive to be bad can be used to accomplish good.

What do we know that Job doesn't know in this moment?

Luke 12:22-32

Does God love Job?

Does God allow Job's suffering?

Does God care about Job?

Does God have a plan to restore Job?

The answer to all of these questions should comfort us that God is at work, even in the midst of trial.

The ultimate comfort to us should be the example of Christ. The question, can suffering accomplish anything should be a non-starter with Christians. Christ is never going to ask you to do anything that he hasn't already done. He suffered unto death so that you might have eternal life. Yes, suffering can accomplish good! The words of Job are echoed in Jesus' crucifixion – "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"

God is working even when it feels like He isn't!

*Handout – 25 Reasons Christians Suffer

E. If true darkness exists, we must share the gospel

Perhaps the greatest lesson we can learn from Job 3, is the necessity of evangelism. While in complete agony, Job wishes he was dead. Why would anyone do that? Job himself speaks of the idea that death provides rest and peace. Something he was not finding in his current situation.

Job was a righteous man and it is reasonable to conclude that he had some hope in an afterlife with God. This would be a peaceful thought in Job's circumstance. As N.T. Christians, we have the privilege of knowing the gift of Christ. We know that through his death and resurrection we have the opportunity for eternal life in paradise with God. However, we also know that those who do not accept Christ do not receive the same fate. They spent eternity in hell, tormented and separated from God.

Luke 16:19-31 – "Lazarus and the Rich Man"

We should see Job 3 as a similar picture. Job is in extreme anguish and pain – physically and mentally. It paralyzes him – He is distraught and doesn't know what to do – there appears to be no end in sight and no way out – all he wants is relief.

Job is a righteous man and he will get relief. God restores Job in this life (something we cannot be guaranteed of) but God also restores Job eternally in the life to come.

You can feel the raw emotion in Job 3 – its uncomfortable to read – this is a picture of a broken and hopeless man.

*It is a picture of what a lost individual will experience eternally. If we can wrap our heads around that then we will understand the necessity of evangelism.

The only guaranteed hope in these situations is Christ. Each one of us has seen broken individuals in this world and each one of us would do anything we could to provide a way out. If we would do so for each of those individuals in a temporal situation – one that won't last – how much more should we be willing to provide a way out of hopelessness in an eternal situation – AND WE HAVE THE ANSWER!

The example of Job's dark and confused heart should remind us of the importance of evangelism.