

6. The voice of the sufferer

June 3, 2012

There was a man who had been married to his wife for 20 years. He had a terminal disease and was hospitalized and put on all these life machine to keep him alive a little longer for the rest of their family could get together.

His faithful wife was standing next to his bed and holding his hand. The man opened his eyes and looked at her with tears in his eyes. He knew that he was going to die very soon. He quietly said, "Do you remember that we were smooching in my car in front of your daddy's house when we dated for the first time?" She smiled and nodded her head.

"Do you also remember that your daddy snuck upon us and yelled at me, "Anyone who kisses my daughter like that and doesn't marry her, is gonna go to prison for 20 years." Her daddy was the judge of that town.

He turned his eyes toward the ceiling and said with a big sigh, "If I had been in a prison, I would get out today."

I know that y'all are godly. But if you are like me, you might had at least one situation that you wish had never happened. If you, somehow, could go back to that time, you'd like to erase it in a heart beat.

In the first comment from Job to his three friends we find Job wishing that he had never been born because his misery seems so unbearable. I believe that the Lord is going to teach us how to handle ourselves without losing our faith in Him in the midst of difficult situations that overwhelm us.

A. JOB CURSED HIS BIRTH, NOT GOD

Job 3:1-10 After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. 2 And Job spoke, and said: 3 "May the day perish on which I was born, And the night in which it was said, 'A male child is conceived.' 4 May that day be darkness; May God above not seek it, Nor the light shine upon it. 5 May darkness and the shadow of death claim it; May a cloud settle on it; May the blackness of the day terrify it. 6 As for that night, may darkness seize it; May it not rejoice among the days of the year, May it not come into the number of the months. 7 Oh, may that night be barren! May no joyful shout come into it! 8 May those curse it who curse the day, Those who are ready to arouse Leviathan. 9 May the stars of its morning be dark; May it look for light, but have none, And not see the dawning of the day; 10 Because it did not shut up the doors of my mother's womb, Nor hide sorrow from my eyes.

The Book of Job has ministered to the hurting for centuries because Job truly understood suffering. It's no surprise that those who experience times of grief and depression turn to the Book Job of the Bible for strength, since only those with wounded hearts can truly empathize with such deep and tortured anguish.

Job's heartrending lament begins in chapter 3, recorded in poetic form rather than in narrative style in chapter 1 and 2.

Some readers might think that Job was cursing God as satan predicted, but that is not the case. He cursed the day of his birth and the night of his conception. He was

wishing that he was not even born. His outburst was not only prompted by his physical suffering, but also by the fact that he felt out of touch with God. He felt so alone.

He lost all of his 10 children at once; he lost his wife's support; he lost his wealth; he lost his reputation and respect. The only thing he gained was the miserable illness that he had to endure day-in, day-out. But the worst part of all these was the utter silence from God. Job cherished his close relationship with God more than anything in the world. During this unknown period of time, he'd heard nothing from heaven, and his cry to the Lord only bounced off the gate of heaven.

That is why when Job speaks, he often speaks to God while his three friends speak much about God but never to Him.

Let's make it clear here. At no time did Job speak of ending his own life. Job's "birthday lament" is not a defense of suicide or so-called "mercy killing" by an ancient Dr. Kevorkian. It is the declaration of a man whose suffering was so intense that he wished he had never been born.

When we are hurting, we may say and do a lot of things that we later regret, wouldn't you agree? Job's suffering was so great that he forgot the blessings that he and his family had enjoyed for so many years. Had he never been born, he would never have been the greatest man in the East! But pain and suffering often make us forget the joys of the past ever so quickly; instead, we have many tendencies to concentrate on the hopelessness of the future.

Job's friends heard his words but did not feel the anguish of his heart, and they took the wrong approach to helping him handle his trials. They argued with his words instead of ministering to his heart.

In v8, we find the word 'Leviathan'. This is the first mention of this strange creature in the Bible, but Leviathan is mentioned prominently in a long discourse beginning at Job 41. Usually Leviathan is considered to be a mythical seven-headed sea-monster or dragon that terrorized sailors and fishermen. According to their ancient myth, when the Leviathan was awakened, this sea beast could cause an eclipse by swallowing the sun or the moon.

Job suggests in poetic terms that if Leviathan had swallowed the sun or the moon on that day, then his birthday, would, in a sense, not exist at all.

B. DEATH OVER LIVING?

Job 3:11-16 "Why did I not die at birth? Why did I not perish when I came from the womb? 12 Why did the knees receive me? Or why the breasts, that I should nurse? 13 For now I would have lain still and been quiet, I would have been asleep; Then I would have been at rest 14 With kings and counselors of the earth, Who built ruins for themselves, 15 Or with princes who had gold, Who filled their houses with silver; 16 Or why was I not hidden like a stillborn child, Like infants who never saw light?"

He added his curse with four "why?" questions that nobody but God could answer. It is easy to ask 'why' but difficult to get the right answer. There is nothing wrong with asking 'why,' as long as we don't get the idea that God owes us an answer.

Yes, even our Lord Jesus asked His Father, "Why have You forsaken Me?" in Matthew 27:46. But if the Lord did tell us why things happen as they do, would that ease our

pain or heal our broken hearts? Let me put it in this way: Does reading the X-ray take away the pain of a broken leg? We live on God's promises, not explanations; so we shouldn't spend too much time asking God 'why.'

From v11 to v26, Job talks about death. Even though he was a godly man, he had limited knowledge about life after death to compare with the born-again believers with good Bible knowledge in the 21st Century. By reading v13, what Job talks about sounds much like the modern-day false doctrine of 'soul sleep' which says that the dead person lies in the grave in some sort of suspended state until they are resurrected on the final day.

Let me show you why the idea of soul sleep is wrong.

2 Corinthians 5:6-8 So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. 7 For we walk by faith, not by sight. 8 We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

The Bible never, ever mentions Catholic's idea of 'purgatory'. The Catholic Church teaches that the fate of those in purgatory can be affected by the actions of the living. Again, the Bible never mentions that doctrine anywhere.

C. WRONG IDEA OF THE AFTER LIFE

Job 3:17-19 There the wicked cease from troubling, And there the weary are at rest. 18 There the prisoners rest together; They do not hear the voice of the oppressor. 19 The small and great are there, And the servant is free from his master.

Job was also wrong in this view of the afterlife in v17. He had the feeling that many people have – that the world beyond this is somehow a better place for everyone. In fact, the unrepented do not cease from troubling in the world beyond; their trouble only increases in hell. In other words, to those who are not born-again, this world is the only heaven they will enjoy.

Speaking of after life, a friend of mine gave me an article of "Dear Abby". The reader's son is gay and she and her husband are struggling because they are not sure how God really views gays and lesbians. She was wondering if "Dear Abby" believes a gay person will go to heaven. Out of her profound theological point of view, "Dear Abby" answers in this way:

"I believe that entrance to heaven is based upon a person's character, not his or her sexual orientation. Today, because of modern scientific studies, we know more about homosexuality than was known when the Bible was written, and that sexual orientation is not a "choice."

WOW, are you serious, "Dear Abby"? I find several things are wrong with what you just said:

1) What any person believes doesn't mean anything against the truth from the Bible.

Romans 3:4a Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar.

2) Entrance to heaven is NOT based upon a person's character, but based on a person's admission of one's sins, and receiving Jesus Christ as one's Savior and Lord, nothing more, nothing less and nothing else.

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

3) Modern scientific studies do not know more about homosexual better than the Bible. Homosexuality is a choice of perversion.

Romans 1:26-32 For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. 27 Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. 28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, 30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; 32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

4) Just like any other human sins, if a homosexual person does not repent from one's sins, he or she will end up in hell.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

Yes, I am not politically correct, nor do I ever want to be, because the Bible, the Word of God is not politically correct.

D. WHY GO ON LIVING?

Job 3:20-26 "Why is light given to him who is in misery, And life to the bitter of soul, 21 Who long for death, but it does not come, And search for it more than hidden treasures; 22 Who rejoice exceedingly, And are glad when they can find the grave? 23 Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, And whom God has hedged in? 24 For my sighing comes before I eat, And my groanings pour out like water. 25 For the thing I greatly feared has come upon me, And what I dreaded has happened to me. 26 I am not at ease, nor am I quiet; I have no rest, for trouble comes."

Very often, disappointment with God begins in Job-like circumstances. The death of a child, a tragic accident, or a loss of occupation may bring on the same questions Job asked, "Why me? What does God have against me? Why does He seem so distant?..."

The battleground of faith can involve physical, emotional, financial or all of the above. But the more important battle, as shown in Job, takes place inside us. Will we trust God? Job teaches us that at the moment when faith is hardest and least likely, then faith is most needed.

Now the discussion begins. Soon it will become a debate, then a dispute; and the Lord will have to intervene to bring matters to a head.

E. PRINCIPLES

Chapter 3 of the Book of Job is difficult for us to read because it illustrates Job's anguish during his darkest period of suffering which we somewhat can identify in our limited ways since we all have been there in one form or another. From Job's lament, we can glean two principles to apply to our daily lives:

1) Some days are too dark for the sufferers to see light. But our God sees us very clearly.

Sometimes we even wonder if God is aware of what is going on. Yes, He knows it very well, and He hears our cry. Our prayers to Him never, never fall on deaf ears.

2) When faith in God is hardest and least likely, then faith in Him is most needed.