



Ancient Cliff Notes

Job

Sunday December 2, 2018

Courage Church, Detroit, MI

scriptures: the book of Job, particularly: Job 1:13-22, Job 1:21b, Job 10:3, Job 10:14, Job 10:15, Job 14:7, Job 14:15, Job 42:10, Job 42:17, 1 Peter 5:8, 1 Peter 5:9, 1 Peter 5:10, James 1, James 5:11, Ezekiel 14:14, 20, Ecclesiastes 7:2-3, Ecclesiastes 7:4, Proverbs 24:3, Isaiah 53:8.

Today, as we continue through the Ancient Cliff Notes series, we are going to take a wide angle view on the book of Job.

I say wide angle, because its 42 chapters long, and we just couldn't possibly do justice to everything that is going on.



I am not, in one sermon, going to be able to make sense of this complicated book for you. There is a lot of depth to this that we will have to cover another time. People have dedicated thousands of pages of commentaries, and thousands of hours of study to try and do that, and I don't know that I've ever read anything conclusive enough for me that left me thinking "okay, Job is sorted out now."

And please... show me the same grace that I have shown all of the many commentators and pastors who I have studied to put this together.

you may not agree with everything that I say. I am doing my best to bring this to life for us, I have studied this book almost non-stop for the last few weeks leading up to this teaching... But - if nothing I read fully convinced

me, then likely nothing I say will fully convince you, and that is okay, that is what it means to wrestle.

But I want to try and help us put ourselves in the center of it a bit to try and understand WHY something like this would even be written, and further, why it would end up in the Bible, and point out at least a few things we can learn from this ancient wisdom literature.

Before we dive in, I want to make one important note:

Job is one of the most MIS-UNDERSTOOD, confusing books in the Bible. The majority of the confusion surrounding the book of Job has to do with genre, and the other factor is the fact that a lot of the book is a conversation in which some of the things that are said about God are accurate, and others are completely wrong... we will tackle that in a few minutes... but first, genre.

In the Old Testament, there are several *genres* of literature. Of course, we have torah... the law... then we have a history section which is focused on telling us things that actually happened throughout history... we have a wisdom section, or a poetry section which is a collection of poems and wise sayings and stories and analogies and parables to help us understand the world more clearly so we can better live in it and face it... and we have the books of the prophets.

But Job is unique, in that it is the story of a historical figure, who ACTUALLY LIVED, but it is told using SO MUCH poetry and symbolism that it is considered a part of the poetry section in the Bible. It is considered to be WISDOM literature. Which affects the way that you have to approach the book.

But what often happens is:

People take this to two different unhealthy extremes... The first is:

they think "oh it's a poem, so Job is a made up character and the whole thing is fictional." Which is historically false...

The PERSON of Job is referenced by the prophet Ezekiel two times (Ezekiel 14:14, 14:20) mentioned alongside of Noah and Daniel, as well as in other ancient literature including the Quran and other documents outside the scope of the Christian faith.

Job is referenced one time in the New Testament, by James (5:11) which we will talk about a bit later.

So the person of Job, historically, almost undoubtedly existed. And his story, unanimously across all literature, is that he was a man WHO LOST EVERYTHING.

Don't erase history just because someone wrote a poem about it.

like, there was a day that I proposed to my wife. And if I were today to write a poem about how I felt that day, the fact that I turned it into poetry doesn't change the FACT that it literally happened.

But the second unhealthy extremely that I think Christians do more often with Job is... because Job IS an actual person, they read the book completely ignoring the fact that it is poetry. They read it as straight history.

But if you do that, it almost certainly will leave you with a distorted view of God, especially if you don't read it CLOSELY... because part of the story communicates that God tells Satan that he can destroy Job's entire life, which includes killing his entire family, even after Job had been completely faithful to God which seems to spit in the face of everything that we learn throughout the Bible about the character of God and His faithfulness to us and his unrelenting love FOR US.

But that is the difference between history and poetry -

something can really happen to someone, and someone can write a poem or a play or a movie or a novel or anything that they want to demonstrate what it is that took place, and as you adapt it for different formats, you tell it in different ways. This writer is not trying to record the historical account of the life of Job, he was using the historical account of the life of Job to communicate a very profound reality.

Let me try and lay it out as best as I can.

The book of Job is the story of a man named Job who lost everything. He lost his wife, he lost his kids, he lost his house... everything.

He really happened.

But Job, almost certainly, did NOT write the book of Job.

It was written, most likely, by someone or a group of people, USING HIS STORY as a way to explain the suffering that they were experiencing.

Some believe it was written by Moses and may even be the oldest written book of the Bible, others make the case (and make it well) that it was written many centuries after that during the Babylonian exile.

Either way, Job would be a really great example for someone to write about, as a connecting point, when trying to pen their own bout with suffering.

IF it was written by exiles... they lost everything... their home, their family, their temple... EVERYTHING.

if it was written earlier, by Moses... a very similar situation was going on for his people in Egypt... slavery... bondage... not being treated like a human... spending every day moving bricks without a single day off - a lot of pain, all the time.

Job's story, the story of a man who had everything, then lost everything... was a way to tell their story.

It is written, really, in a form similar to that of a play... in Acts (Act 1, Act 2, Act 3) however, there is not any historical evidence that "plays" existed yet, so it's only theoretical as to whether or not that was the intent of writing it.

So when it begins with God telling Satan he can kill Job's whole family, that is what is called a prologue... a prologue is "a separate introductory section of a literary work" - it was written as something apart from the main lump of the story, that sets the stage for all of the conversations that take place.

Explanations of this section will vary, and to what degree what parts are poetry and what are not is debatable, but this book has always been understood as something more than just a telling of history... of something that has happened.

so something real happened to someone...

and *someone else* wrote about it, as a way to describe suffering, and the struggle that we have with it.

And it is an absolute roller coaster of emotions that honestly, I think that everyone has felt at some point in their lives.

But the book never gives us the reason why we suffer.

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Now, this is just an observation... but I believe its possible that the reason that so many people struggle so much with this book, beyond the fact that they don't understand the way it was written or the reason it was written...

is the fact that they simply are asking the wrong questions.

When in fact, the book is ABOUT PEOPLE WHO ARE ASKING THE WRONG QUESTIONS. The bulk of the book is a dialogue between Job and his friends, trying to sort out what Job could have done wrong to deserve such pain.

And where we can't spend a lot of time in that dialogue, one thing we will see is just that... everybody who tries to understand suffering ends up in the same place... *more confused*.

And everybody who CLAIMS to understand suffering ends up in the same place... with an empty answer that doesn't solve anything. AKA - WRONG.

Okay, so let's try our best and cliff notes our way through this book that is rather bizarre. The story begins by telling us that: **Job has everything.**

He is very wealthy.

The book begins by telling us that he was blameless and upright, he feared God and he resisted evil. He had seven sons and three daughters.

Tons of livestock... Tons of feasts... and in the story, there then is a meeting between God and someone called "the Satan" - a name meaning "the accuser" or "the one who is against" ...

and "the Satan" tells God essentially: "hey, Job has everything and that is the only reason why He serves you so faithfully... you have put a hedge of protection on him..."

And notice this because its extremely important, in verse 11, the Satan says "turn your hand against all that he has, and I bet he will fall... he won't love you anymore."

Catch this... Satan asks God - "hurt Job" - and God, seeing the Satan's point, agrees only to step back from the situation... but He himself refuses to touch Job.

God's character would not allow him to strike his own hand against Job, someone who was blameless.

And so, in this poetic dialogue between God and Satan, God tells Satan "YOU may test Job, but you can't kill him."

Lets read what happens to Job.

Job 1:13-22

“Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house, and there came a messenger to Job and said, “The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you.” While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, “The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you.” While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, “The Chaldeans formed three groups and made a raid on the camels and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you.” ¹⁸ While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, “Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house, ¹⁹ and behold, a great wind came across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”

Then **Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. And he said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”**

In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.”

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note the very last sentence... Job did not charge God with wrong.

So Job, who had everything, *loses everything*.

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For the last couple of years, this time of year we have seen a lot of mice in our house. Its been under a lot of construction, moving things like our furnace which of course left a gaping hole in the floor for a while, tearing off walls that took longer to rebuild than we expected... so the house has just not been very “sealed” - and last year, we tried everything to stop them and ended up just having to set a whole bunch of traps... and we got a ton of them with the traps.

But this year, it has been different. And I can say this today because we do have a furnace... but we didn't have a furnace until a couple of weeks ago, because we began a project to move the furnace this last summer, and really, as always, we bit off more than we could chew and putting it in its new place was **a whole lot easier dreamed up, that it was done.**

And it got really cold the last couple of weeks before we got it going. And when you have a house that has several walls that aren't insulated or drywalled yet... and you have no furnace... and you only have a sub floor on top of a crawl space... it gets really cold.

And we knew it was REALLY BAD, when we began finding mice that had frozen to death in our dining room, and our kitchen...

last year we would wake up in the morning and check the mouse traps. This year, we just checked the floor... and there they were.

It was probably more disgusting than even how it sounds.

But here is the thing with heat... every day, as it gets closer and closer to winter, and it gets colder and colder out... it gets harder and harder to get out of bed... so it starts affecting your whole day when you wake up freezing.

That joyful "I am okay with this, God is still on the throne" mindset can only stay up there so long, before you start getting... angry.

and before long, people start looking at you like "dude. what are you doing to your family? you can't live like that..." as if there is another option that is just magically available for six people to live while we wait on this project getting done.

Whether or not we have a working furnace in our house is absolutely beyond what we ourselves are able to do... its not something we can just go do ourselves... it is out of our control.

So what we chose to do was to, using space heaters... make our bedrooms warm... so we put electric heaters in the three bedrooms, and

created these spaces of warmth... where if we stay in these rooms, and we leave the doors shut so the heat stays in these rooms, we will be warm even though everything around us is freezing.

We found a solution that at least sustained us, when our CIRCUMSTANCES WERE BEYOND OUR CONTROL.

And some times in life there are things that will happen that are just beyond your control. They are beyond reasoning... they are not in line with the perfect plan that you had... sometimes they don't even line up as the result you wanted after you worked really really really hard for something.

And what do you do when things do not go the way that you want them to?

For Job, if you read the entire book, you see that even though he SEEMS to handle it well at first, (and notice I said SEEMED) - and doesn't blame God at first... and still praises God and wears that smile... reality wears him down and eventually crushes him... and He gets very very MAD at God.

But, like I mentioned earlier.. one of the things that makes Job such a hard book to study, is that throughout the book, there are a lot of parts in the conversation that takes place that are THEOLOGICALLY SOUND, and there are other parts that are THEOLOGICALLY UNSOUND... because it is a dialogue between humans trying to sort out something that is unexplainable.

Almost the entire book is a dialogue... a conversation between people trying to sort out the question of "why would God do this to Job" - and the reason why Job BEGINS by responding in a way that still seems to be giving glory to God, but he gradually gets worse and worse, is because Job is basing his entire theology of God on something that IS NOT SOUND. In fact, it is something that is not TRUE.

We read it a minute ago, and this may blow everything you believe into a million pieces and maybe even get really mad at me... especially if you grew up in church singing the praise and worship song that quotes this...

when I first got here, I told Emily “that one is on the do not play list” - and I will show you why.

Job 1:21b - Job says “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.”

FALSE. Period.

When I first begin in ministry, I remember as an intern sitting in on/listening in on a conversation with a worship pastor talking to a senior pastor at a large church, and he was talking about the dangers of leading churches in worship songs about God that in which we unknowingly are confessing something dangerously unsound about God, and he used the example that in churches across the world millions of people every week throw their hands in the air and cry out these words “he gives and takes away” - and I don’t know why, but man did that stick with me. I can still see in my mind the posture the worship leader was sitting in, and I can still hear his voice saying it.

And you are probably saying in your mind, HOW COULD THAT NOT BE TRUE? It is in the Bible!

Okay, I will show you how it not only is untrue but it also is dangerous.

And that is not to knock the artist that wrote the song. Dawn and I are great friends with someone in that band, I think that art gives you room to wrestle with the things you are feeling... but there is a difference between art as an expression of how you feel, and in claiming something as a truth in your life.

Again, I read Job as a poem because it was written as a poem... but for just one minute, let’s READ IT ALL LITERALLY, and hopefully you will still come to the same conclusion.

Satan goes to God and He says: God, you should hurt Job and see if He still serves you. You gave him everything... now take it away.

God does NOT do it. In the story, God merely tells Satan that HE can put Job to the test. God himself is not doing it. God gave... But he refused to be the one who takes it away.

Of course, Job doesn't know that. So He blames God. And here is the problem with that...

He begins by saying "blessed be the name of the Lord" - but down a little later in the conversation... the more he builds off of that foundation that actually believes that it is God who is doing this... that it is God who is taking away... the more angry he gets at God... and the more angry he gets at God, the most distorted his view of God becomes...

In chapter 10, Job says "I will say to God - does it seem good to you to oppress?" He calls God an oppressor!" He later says "if I sin you DON'T FORGIVE ME" (10:14) -

Building off of the foundation that God causes evil against Him caused Job to completely question the character of God to the point that He was proclaiming that God won't even forgive his sins.

After that, there is this kind of culminating moment. I heard John Mark Comer point this out and it absolutely blew my mind. In Job 10:15 Job likens God to a lion who is about to *devour* him...

God. A Lion. Hunting Job down like a lion.

But 1 Peter 5:8 actually says that who prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour? the adversary... the devil. THE SAME ONE WHO WE KNOW IS AT WORK IN JOB'S LIFE IN THIS STORY.

Job is attributing the work of the Devil to the hand of God. And it is slowly unraveling everything that he believes.

NO MATTER WHAT WAY YOU READ THAT FIRST PART ABOUT THE HEAVENLY COUNCIL, POETICALLY OR LITERALLY... YOU MUST SEE THAT IT IS NOT GOD WHO IS DOING EVIL TO JOB.

FOUNDATION IS EVERYTHING.

IF we live our lives thinking that the God of the Bible, who is clearly spoken of as “the God who is and was and will forever be (Isaiah 43:13-25)... who is unchanging (Psalm 55:19, James 1:17)... who is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8)...”

if we think that His character sways with the wind, and he randomly just decides to do horrible things to people, it won't be long before we decide we don't want to serve a God like that.

In our ever changing world, God is the one thing that is constant. He is love, and He is just. Those are two things that He has to be according to the Bible. He can't not be those things.

The word “The **Immutable** means "God is unchanging in his character, will, and covenant promises.”

2 Timothy 2:13 says “if we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.”

And when something comes up that causes us to question the love of God or the justice of God, we need to be slow to accept it blindly and try and figure out what is going on beneath the layers of this that maybe we don't understand?

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So Job's friends hear about what happened to Job, and at first, they actually do something really awesome. They do the right thing...

Job's three friends come sit with him (7 days)

and for seven days, they don't say a word. They just sit with him... Empathize - they are a shoulder to cry on if he needs it... they connect with his pain.

Sometimes when people are broken, hurting... lost... lonely... depressed... all they need is someone to SHOW UP. Showing up will go so much further than trying to solve something that you genuinely are not capable of solving.

the word compassion, which is one of our CORE VALUES... in Latin, it literally means to “co-suffer” or to “suffer with” - when you choose to live a compassionate life, which we believe Jesus has CALLED US ALL TO LIVE THAT WAY... it means that we are willing to suffer with those who are suffering, whether they are like us or not... it does not matter. Whether we get it or not... it doesn't matter. One of the biggest takeaways from the book of Job is the simple reality THAT WE DON'T GET IT. and that is OK.

It is not about advice. The moment that Job's friends start getting into the advice business, the whole thing falls apart... they make God angry... it becomes a bigger mess.

Job's friends try and find a reason for the suffering

and in doing so, they begin to try and figure out what Job could have possibly done wrong to deserve such a horrific fate... Other wisdom literature of the day told would say: IF YOU DO _____, THEN THIS WILL HAPPEN.

"So what did you do, Job?"

They continue, back and forth. And Job even calls them “Miserable Comforters” - you guys are horrible at this! (16:2)

And it goes on and on and on. And Job says some terrible things to God that paint a picture of a man who is obviously broken and confused and lost in all of this...

But again... Job believes that God is doing this. Then a guy named Elihu finally speaks up, who apparently was there the whole time but was young so out of respect he was slow to speak... but he finally does speak explaining why they are all wrong and how awful it is that Job's friends could not find an answer, yet they still told Job that he was wrong... and I

could teach a whole sermon on just the first thing that he says, but that is for another day.

The dialogue goes on and on and on. Why God? What did Job do? Why would you do this?

until finally Job is just like “God, dude... come down here and explain yourself.”

And this is what the writer says happens next... God does come...

I love the way that the ESV translates this... it says (Job 38:1) “Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind” it is the Hebrew word: *ca`ar* (actually pronounced sah-ar-uh)

it means *storm*.

out of the storm...

Don't miss this: Because God shows up in all sorts of ways throughout the Bible... but for Job of all people...

When Job was in the middle of the biggest storm of his entire life...

God shows up IN THE STORM!

God joins the conversation

But get this, instead of answering Job's questions, HE ASKS JOB A BUNCH OF QUESTIONS OF HIS OWN.

And he doesn't give Job the answer that Job was asking for. What God does, instead, is he begins to take Job on this journey through the wonders of creation... one of the first things God says is:

Job, where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? (38:4)

Where were you? Oh that's right... you weren't.

Or maybe tell me this, Job... who determined the measurements of it all? Who is in those details? surely you know, Job. (v. 5)

Have you comprehended the expanse of the earth? (v. 18)

God is not trying to insult Job, He is trying to show him that even on Job's best day, when he has learned more than he ever knew before about God and the universe... he still only understands a fraction of a percent of all there is to understand.

The details that go into every day life that we take for granted, God says "I am in that."

That storm that you are walking through... God didn't cause it... but he is in it, with you.

its beyond your scope of understanding, yet there is beauty in it because God is in it... and He is not in it, in the sense that he is causing it or up in heaven creating it... but he is in it with you... Just like he was in the furnace with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. He didn't put them there, but He was there with them! He is the potter who holds the clay in his hands, as Jeremiah says. There is a difference between God HOLDING YOU IN HIS HANDS EVEN ON YOUR WORST DAY, and God using his hands to create your worst day.

He is holding you.

Let me give you an example to try and make sense of this.

For adults, we understand things like death, at least to the degree that we know we aren't going to get to see that person again in this world... they have expired... their breath is gone.

But it's a very difficult topic to explain to a small child, and because of that, we have to communicate difficult things to them in DIFFERENT ways than we would communicate bad news to an adult.

It is the same with God... He knows that we can't comprehend even a fraction of all that is going on, so he has to communicate with us in a way that we may not be getting all of the details, but He gives us enough to know that WE ARE MEANT TO CONTINUE ON THE JOURNEY... we are meant to keep going, and we can at least comprehend the what, even if we don't understand the why.

This became VERY real to us a few weeks ago.

Our kids go to a school that begins the education process through playing, and through stories... so it's all very interactive with the teachers, they are an enormous part of our kids world. For those of you who know our story, especially when we first moved to Detroit our life was TOTAL CHAOS... so many crazy things happened to us and the kids were there for lots of it...

and this school has just been an absolute haven in the midst of some difficult times like that. And both Brooklyn and Fiona had the same pre-K teacher, for two years each... their very first teacher and she just was so good to those kids and helped them always have a place of refuge and of peace even in the middle of some STORMS...

but then she got very sick, and had to take a lot of time off... and Fiona every day would tell us how much she missed her teacher... and then it was determined that she was too sick to return at all... and Fiona, who was still in her class at that time, again, was absolutely devastated.

Then just a couple weeks ago, we got word that she had passed away.

And it was very very difficult to explain that to our kids, especially the two who she had poured so much into both of their little lives for so long.

Now, the school of course is very careful with communication and how they communicate with such small children, but they helped us with resources and things like that for how to communicate to our kids... they actually gave



us these stories to read to them that would explain death in the form of an allegory, which would then open up the conversation for us to talk to them about what happened. It was still difficult, but it made it easier.



and two days later, at the school we had what is called the “lantern walk” - they do it every year, the kids in Kindergarten and Pre-K light these lanterns that they made themselves, and walk from the school around a big field and end at a campfire where someone is playing music on an acoustic guitar. Then everyone surrounds the fire and we sing a bunch of songs together. It actually

fell on my birthday, and so one of the songs was they sang Happy Birthday to me.

But we ended the whole night by everyone, together, singing the song “He’s got the whole world in His hands”

and nobody said anything directly related to her, but to me, there was just something about a bunch of 4, 5, and 6 year olds who had just lost their teacher... for many of them it was their very first experience with any sort of loss or pain at the level... all gathering and singing “He’s got the whole world in His hands”

God doesn’t cause it... But He is holding you through it, so tightly... and He will never, ever, ever let you go.

We want reasons things happen... we are people who want answers.

but pain rarely bears an answer.

because life is not about answers. It is about trusting that God has the whole world in His hands, and when His hand is on it, anything can turn around, at anytime.

And that we have a role in His master plan that one way or another IS BEING SHAPED BY OUR EXPERIENCES.

So the question shifts from: why? and becomes: what is next?

What is this developing in me that will make me a better follower of Jesus? A better dad? A better husband? A better pastor?

What can be birthed out of what has died?

Job himself says it like this in chapter 14

“If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my service I would wait, till my renewal should come.”

and now, verse 15... this is enormous:

“You would call, and I would answer you; **you would long for the work of your hands.**”

God, you created me with your hands and I know that the desire of your heart is to be with that which you have created. Right there with me in this suffering... helping me understand that there is something powerful that I can do with this!

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Think about this verse in Ecclesiastes -

Its Ecclesiastes 7:2-3

It is better to go to the house of mourning
than to go to the house of feasting,
for this is the end of all mankind,

and the living will lay it to heart.
Sorrow is better than laughter,
for by sadness of face the heart is made glad.

This wisdom literature likely written by Solomon here speaks to that... He says "its better to go into a house of mourning than a house of feasting..." you could say it like this: it's better to go to a funeral than a banquet.

It is certainly more FUN to go to a banquet, and it can be very edifying to be around people and enjoy moments and we want that for everyone. But when you go to a funeral, what happens?

we connect with our humanity... empathize with someone else's, and leave grateful that we still have days ahead of us.

Solomon says it this way: we all are going to die, and to go in to a house of mourning will cause us to lay that reality on our heart. But it is not meant to be depressing, it is meant to be inspiring.

Because if you never slow down to realize the brevity of it all, you miss life.

But when someone passes away, any time I go to a funeral I leave wanting to be a better husband with the time that I have left. I leave wanting to be a more present dad with the brief time that I have with my little girls.

Now... continuing that thought:

I want to show you something about the placement in the Bible of the book of Job, that I find incredibly significant. (Job for everyone by John Goldengay, introduction, page 3) - and I am going somewhere with this.

Again, Job is categorized as wisdom literature, it is in the poetry section of the Bible... and in fact, it BEGINS the poetry section of the Bible in the way that it is ordered in our modern Bibles.

But it was written, NOT ONLY TO EXPLAIN SUFFERING, but as a response to the wisdom literature of the day that consistently would tell us: IF YOU DO THIS, THEN _____ WILL HAPPEN.

Job is what happens WHEN YOU DO THIS _____... you do the right thing... you follow the 12 steps to a successful life... you behave the way you are supposed to behave...

and the world STILL falls apart.

Think about that meeting between God and Satan in chapter one. It is extremely poetic, and it actually does an incredible job of setting up the entire book.

LOOK AT THE POINT THAT IT MAKES! God tells Satan “Job is faithful!”

And then Satan, reasonably, answers God and says “Yes, of course Job is faithful... he is the perfect example of “if _____, then _____.”

Who wouldn't be faithful when EVERY SINGLE TIME YOU ARE FAITHFUL YOUR LIFE IS BLESSED, and you get more and more and more.

“Let him be faithful, take away everything that he has, and see if he is still faithful.”

The wisdom in the book of Job tells us that life does not always go the way that you want it to even when you do everything that you are called to do.

But notice this:

Job is the FIRST BOOK of wisdom literature in the structure of the Bible. So the wisdom literature of the Bible BEGINS with Job, and the concept of suffering.

The next book is Psalms, which is, more than anything a book of PRAYERS.

then we get into Proverbs, which is wisdom for how to live life. A very very very IF _____, THEN _____ book. More so than all the others.

but then, from there you get Ecclesiastes, which, if we are honest with ourselves, IS A BOOK ALL ABOUT DOUBT. And then the conclusion of the wisdom literature is Song of Songs... which is all about LOVE.

So the wisdom literature builds from suffering, wrestles with the questions of WHY, and then ends on LOVE.

The thing we should all be building toward...

okay, now watch this:

Solomon, in that verse that says it is better to go to a funeral than a banquet, actually goes on after this, to say "The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning" (Ecclesiastes 7:4) - as in, wisdom comes out of suffering.

Now... Proverbs 24:3 says:

"by wisdom a house is built."

So Solomon, who likely wrote both Ecclesiastes and most of Proverbs, and who is considered to be the wisest person to ever live, seems to be saying that there is a case to be made that a wise life is established through suffering.

And he is not the only one to say that.

There is a passage in Peter that really speaks to this. We did a whole series on this a few years ago now called "a case for bad choices" - but the verse is 1 Peter 5:10 - But understanding the context of this verse ties it to Job more than you could ever imagine.

Remember, Job said that God was like a lion waiting to pounce... when really we know it was the Satan doing the damage, and we know that 1 Peter 5:8 says that it is the devil who is a prowling lion looking for whom he can devour... THEN it says: resist him.

Resist the prowling lion... knowing that the same suffering you are experiencing, others around the world are also experiencing. Nobody is along in it...

But do you know what that means? We read this thinking that the Devil is looking for weak people who he can get to do sinful things and we should resist those things... AND WE SHOULD RESIST, of course. But what it actually is saying is that the Devil is out, trying to kill your FAITH by making you suffer, because IF he can bring pain into your life... and can convince you that it is God causing that pain YOU WILL LOSE THE BATTLE WITH EVIL because if God is opposing you and your life then that would make God your enemy. And by default you would lose your faith in God. Or at least in his character.

That is why it says “Resist the Devil, standing firm in your faith” (5:9) knowing that others just like you are going through the same things... because evil IS out to destroy you, but it will not win if you resist it, and on the other side of it is a NEW YOU that is capable of anything.

VERSE 10:

“after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself **restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.**”

The Greek word Peter uses here that is translated as “establish”, which is the last thing on this list of what Peter says that suffering will do *for* you, is the Greek word *themelioō* (the melly-ah-mo) -

it means to lay the foundation or to make stable. The old King James version translates it as “settles” - It’s the same word that the writer of Hebrews (1:10) uses when saying “You, Lord, *laid the foundation* of the earth in the *beginning*” The same foundation that Job was not there for...

So in the same way God created the entire beautiful earth... we are made into who we are called to be for Jesus when our foundation is built off of persevering through suffering.

Something can come out of a person who has suffered that simply can not be produced in any other way. That is what James 1 says, it says that when we suffer... when we are persecuted... when it feels like everything is coming against us... count it all joy... not because of what we are going through, but because of what it is producing IN US. In fact, one thing that it says that we look over... its one of the first things that James says there... he says WHEN YOUR FAITH IS TESTED... it produces in you steadfastness.

We like to think that when our faith is tested, we just automatically are going to be able to withstand whatever it is that comes at us, which is why I believe so many Christians are so disappointed in themselves and let their lives be weighed down by the bad decisions that they make in some of those faith-testing moments... but James tells us... it is a process!

And then in James chapter 5, he actually says “you have heard of the steadfastness of Job...”

“and you have seen the purposes of the Lord and how He is steadfast and merciful.” -

its like, Job was written so that we would have something to look back on and remind us... you can do it.

You can make it a little further. God can still use you, even when you think you have blown every opportunity He ever gave you...

God can redeem the broken things, and give you beauty for ashes.

Job himself says this in Job 14, and its spoken in the middle of a lament and it seems like he has lost all hope and from the way it reads it almost sounds like he is saying it with spite and anger, but its so significant:

14:7 “For there is hope for a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its shoots will not cease.”

What Job doesn't realize as he is speaking this way is that it is literally what happened to him... he was cut down, but he would sprout again... and as

the book ends we read that in Job's latter days God blessed him EVEN MORE than he had blessed him when he was younger...

the truth is that God is at work in the deepest ways when our pain reaches to the deepest places. Beauty for ashes is not just a cheesy preacher line... it is a promise from God that He holds the world in his hands, and though it may not always feel like it, he is going to redeem the whole thing... that evil will not win the day... that death will not have the final word...

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Isaiah 53 says something about Jesus that is very interesting. In verse 8, the prophet prophesies about Jesus and says that "By oppression and judgment He was taken away... and that he was CUT OFF out of the land of the living.

CUT OFF. His days were cut short in what seemed like his prime... When his ministry was growing, reaching the most people... he was still so young, and it all got taken from Him.

But yet in the end, Jesus did more for us in His death and Resurrection, then he even did in his life and ministry.

Jesus is the ultimate Job, someone not deserving to suffer, yet He suffered. Someone who's foundation was one of suffering, but who's glory is infinitely greater than the momentary pain, as awful as it was, that he endured.

An innocent man, bearing a weight beyond comprehension... so that He could do the miracle work of dying in place of all of us who deserve what He had to pay.

and if that was the path that God used to save the world through Jesus, then we must not be surprised when God takes our broken pieces, and uses them to write our greatest story.

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In the end, after it all, in the same way that Jesus resurrected and is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God... God restored Job's fortune... In fact, he gave him twice as much as he had in the beginning.

God gives Job more than he had in the beginning.

The Bible says his latter days were greater than his beginning (42:12) He had ten children, and the book ends by saying that Job died an OLD MAN, FULL OF DAYS. (42:17)

But if you were to read JUST the very beginning of Job, and just the very end... you would read about a guy who had a whole lot... and a little while later he had TWICE AS MUCH AS HE HAD AT THE BEGINNING.

And most of us look at other people... successful people... and we assume that is what it was like... we don't see that space in the middle, when every day is a battle. We don't see the doctors report, or the investment gone bad... or the bankruptcy. We don't see the arguments, or the tears shed for the children who they are far from. We don't see the uphill battle they fought for ten years to get out of debt before being able to take that leap that set them up.

And its easy to live our lives feeling like "woe is me, God is blessing everybody else, my problems are bigger than everyone else's...nobody understands..."

and maybe nobody understands. But you don't understand either. We do not see between the lines of our own lives much less other people's lives. Even when people let us in, there are always layers behind the layers and there is ALWAYS more going on than we realize.

I will end with this:

I mentioned earlier, that when you don't have a furnace going, you don't want to get out of bed. I know it's hard to get out of bed anyway, but honestly... its really hard when it is cold like that.

Anyway, we were late getting the kids to school. Every single day a few weeks ago. And one Thursday (October 18, 2018) after we had signed the girls into the office to get their tardy slips, we met up with Fiona's class... Fiona is, of the three girls that go to school... the youngest. She is in PreK. And one of the boys from class saw her and said: you are late Fiona! Again, the kid had no idea what was going on, underneath the surface.

and her teacher, without hesitation, chimed in and said "she is not late. She is on time."

and Fiona smiled at her teachers affirmation of her.

When you are going through something, and its just not going the way that you thought it would go... and the weight of it all slows you down... it doesn't take long to notice that you aren't getting where you wanted to go as quickly as you thought that you would...

and what do we do in our minds after that? we start to think things like: okay God... where are you? where were you? why haven't you showed up yet?

are you late?
are you coming at all?

But He is there.

And for those of you in this place who are in the middle of a storm, today... right now... asking "GOD!!! WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO SHOW UP?" Remember what James says about Job... That guy was steadfast... **STAY STEADFAST!!!**

but not only was he steadfast... **BUT GOD SHOWED UP, RIGHT THERE... IN HIS STORM.**

And He will do the same for you.