

Despair: a Cry for a Friend
Job 6:14

May 15, 2005

SERMON NOTES

A. Summary of Job's Situation

1. Job 1:1-3 — Job, who lived in the land of U___, was a G_____ man who had great P_____ and a L_____ family
2. Job 1:13-19 — Satan, given permission by God to test Job, took away from him all his W_____ and his C_____
3. Job 2:7 — When Job remained faithful, Satan gained permission a second time and struck Job with painful B_____
4. Job 2:9 — Job's wife advised him to ...
5. Job 2:11 — Job was then visited by ...
6. Job chapter 3: Job Cries Out
 - a. Job 3:1-3 — Job cursed the day of his B_____
 - b. Job 3:11 — failing that, Job wished he had ...
 - c. Job 3:20-21 — or even now that he would D_____
 - d. Job 12:2; 16:2, 4; 26:2-3 — Job's friends said that his was suffering because of his W_____; and Job responded by saying...
7. Job chapters 3 & 4: Eliphaz's first speech to Job
 - a. Job 4:7-8 "Job, you are R_____ what you have S_____"
 - b. Job 5:7 "Man is born to T_____ as the sparks fly upward"
 - c. Job 5:8-9 "Job, if I were you, I would S_____ God"
 - d. Job 5:17 "Job, this is God's D_____"

B. Job chapter 6 — How is Job Feeling by Now?

1. Job is really suffering
 - a. Job 6:2-3 "My suffering is out of P_____ to my sin"
 - b. When God's children are really suffering, the question that they want God to answer is "W_____?"
2. Job has an unseen loss
 - a. Job 6:11 — Job's strength is sapped, and he is unable to keep going, not just due to health, but because he has lost H_____
 - b. When people are in this position, they need to ...
3. Nice, easy, pat answers will not satisfy Job
 - a. Job 6:3 — Job admits that his words have been R_____ ...
 - b. Job 6:25-26 — ... and that they belong to the W_____
 - c. When God's people are in this position they often say ...
 - d. When we hear this we should ...

C. How should a friend respond to despair

1. Job 6:14-20 (our scripture reading) describes a desert stream that
2. Job 6:21 — Job says that his friends are ...
3. Job 6:14 — A despairing man needs K_____ from his friend

D. Application

1. the 4 D's (despondency, despair, dejection and depression) show us that we need a F_____ or we need to be F_____ to such
2. Proverbs 18:24 better than earthly friends is ...
3. John 15:13-15, 1 Peter 5:7 — Jesus, God the Son, qualifies for this because ...
4. Romans 5:5 — When a friend of ours is suffering we need to ...

A. Introduction

1. outline of the background to Job's situation

a. in chapter 1, Job is introduced

- (A) living in Uz, probably south of Canaan in Suez-Arabia
- (B) blameless, upright, fearing God, shunning evil; godly
- (C) with great possessions of sheep, camels, oxen
- (D) having 7 sons and 3 daughters
- (E) serving as the family priest, sacrificing for his children

b. then there follows dialogues between God and Satan

- (A) God holding up Job as His champion
- (B) Satan saying Job would curse God if he took away

- (1) first, his possessions
- (2) then, his personal comfort

(C) so Satan

- (1) in chapter 1, takes away Job's wealth and family
- (2) in chapter 2, his health
- (3) Satan did his worst; and Job didn't curse God

c. so by the end of chapter 2, Job is

- (A) covered with boils and sores
- (B) sitting in dust and ashes
- (C) told by his wife (Job 2:9b NAS): *"Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!"*
- (D) is visited by his three friends

- (1) Eliphaz the Temanite; from the land of Seir (Edom)
- (2) Bildad (the "brutal") the Shuhite; probably Arabic
- (3) Zophar the Naamathite; probably an Arabian area

(E) who have come to sit with him and to comfort him, and they sat there for a week because of his great grief

2. in chapter 3, Job cries out

- a. regretting he was ever born, Job 3:3 (NAS): *"Let the day perish on which I was to be born, And the*

- night *which said, `A boy is conceived.'*"
- b. or, wishing he had died at birth, Job 3:11 (NAS): *"Why did I not die at birth, Come forth from the womb and expire?"*
 - c. or that even now he would die, Job 3:20-21a (NAS): *"Why is light given to him who suffers, And life to the bitter of soul; Who long for death, but there is none, ..."*
 - d. then over the next 20 chapters, or so, these three friends
 - (A) one by one
 - (B) at first gradually, indirectly, obliquely
 - (C) then more directly, more cruelly, more harshly
 - (D) first suggest, then state, that Job's situation
 - (E) has arisen because of Job's wickedness
 - e. with Job responding to each of them in turn, and getting as equally upset with them as he is in his situation
 - (A) Job 12:2 (NAS): *"Truly then you are the people, And with you wisdom will die!"*
 - (B) Job 16:2, 4 (NAS): *"I have heard many such things; Sorry comforters are you all ... I too could speak like you, If I were in your place. I could compose words against you, And shake my head at you."*
 - (C) Job 26:2-3 (NAS): *"What a help you are to the weak! How you have saved the arm without strength! What counsel you have given to one without wisdom! What helpful insight you have abundantly provided!"*
 - (D) it's easy to suggest remedies when your are not the sufferer
3. In chapters 4–5 we have the record of the first speaker, Eliphaz
- a. who in very flowing language
 - b. introduces the theme of the 3 friends in Job 4:7–8 (NAS): *"Remember now, who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright destroyed? According to what I have seen, those who plow iniquity And those who sow trouble harvest {reap} it."*
 - c. or, "Job, you sinned, you suffer" which will be elaborated over many chapters
 - d. and, after claiming a special visionary experience from God, giving him authority to speak this way
 - e. Eliphaz points out that adversity is the common lot of man, Job 5:7 (NAS): *"For man is born for trouble, As sparks fly upward."*
 - f. suggesting that if it were he in Job's shoes, Job 5:8–9 (NAS): *"But as for me, I would seek God, And*

I would place my cause before God; Who does great and unsearchable things, Wonders without number."

g. and adding, Job 5:17 (NAS): "Behold, how happy is the man whom God reproveth, So do not despise the discipline of the Almighty."

4. so, how do things that all this leaves Job feeling?
 - a. he has lost everything: possessions and family
 - b. his health is gone and he suffers day and night
 - c. his friends start to tell him platitudes, nice thoughts, adages that you might embroider on a pillow case or have written on a plaque on the wall
 - d. let's look at chapter 6 and see how Job tells it;

B. How is Job Feeling?

1. Job is really suffering
 - a. first, this is not just simply a bad day in his life; Job is experiencing deep grief, ongoing suffering:
 - b. the 4 D's: despondency, despair, dejection, and depression
 - c. so he tells his friends, Job 6:2-3 (NAS): "Oh that my vexation were actually weighed, And laid in the balances together with my iniquity! For then it would be heavier than the sand of the seas, Therefore my words have been rash."
 - (A) Job doesn't pretend sinlessness; he knows his iniquity
 - (B) but this onslaught to him (and to us who know what is going on behind the scenes) is far out of proportion
 - d. you may have come across someone who looks as though they had the full weight of the world upon their shoulders — well, that was Job
 - e. if you have felt that way, or are trying to help someone who feels that way, then what Job has to say is for you — the message of Job is for those who are really suffering and are seeking an answer from God, "WHY?"
2. Job has a loss they can not see
 - a. Job 6:11 (NAS): "What is my strength, that I should wait? And what is my end, that I should endure?"
 - b. Job does not have strength to continue, Job cannot foresee any satisfactory end; in short, Job has lost hope

- c. now, this is an important thing to recognize about the 4 D's, whether it be us who is affected or someone else: it becomes nearly impossible to look beyond this time and place; the outlook is that things will always be as bad as they are now — this is the loss of hope
- d. and what a loss! Martin Luther expressed it as **"Everything that is done in the world is done by hope"**^{2}.
- e. there was another who was in a position where He could have lost hope, but did not:
 - One day, they left Him alone in the garden,
 - One day He rested, from suffering free;
 - Angels came down o'er His tomb to keep vigil—
 - Hope of the hopeless, my Saviour is He! ^{—{3}}.
- f. so, if we are to restore a healthy mind, a proper outlook, a joy instead of sadness, a delight instead of delirium, then we need to recapture hope — to turn to the One who is the Hope of the hopeless, Jesus Christ, our Saviour

3. nice, easy, pat answers will not satisfy Job

- a. let's pick up again the last part of verse 3 (NAS): **Therefore my words have been rash**
- b. and add to them his later words in verses 25–26 (NAS): **"How painful are honest words! But what does your argument prove? Do you intend to reprove my words, When the words of one in despair belong to the wind?"**
- c. do you see the point here?
 - (A) Eliphaz' speech is noble, full of wonderful truth, sound theological reasoning, a fine sermon — but it entirely misses the point – Job is not an academic problem, no mere psychological case study – Job is his friend who is grieving and searching for answers
 - (B) even Job realizes that in his state he isn't always speaking sensibly or rationally: grief causes people to make rash statements, to use words that belong to the wind, **to say things they really do not mean**
 - (C) that is an important lesson; if you are with someone who is grieving, don't listen to their words: **listen to their heart** — don't give simple, pat answers; express that you are as bewildered as they, and pray for grace

C. How should friend respond to despair

- 1. in that passage that we read, Job 6: 14–20, there is a graphic scene taken from a road in the desert
 - a. in the desert there are wadis

- b. deep gullies cut through the land by the spring waters
- c. flowing from the melting of the snow on the mountains and the spring rains – rains that will transform a desert area almost overnight into a lush oasis
- d. now picture, if you will, a caravan following this road
- e. led by a leader who has come this way previously
- f. remembering that in such and such a place he came to a river, a wadi through which flowed a cooling stream
- g. where his animals and his people could get refreshment
- h. and lo! What is there? A dry, hot, dusty river bed
- i. and this, says Job, is what his brothers have become: Job 6:21a (NAS): *Indeed, you have now become such*
- j. *Despair is a cry for a friend* and Jobs friends failed him just as that dried-up stream fail the travellers in their need
- k. which brings us to our text

2. Job 6:14 (NAS): *“For the despairing man there should be kindness from his friend; Lest he forsake the fear of the Almighty.”*

- a. now the last part of that verse can be understood in two ways; namely, that the first part should be carried out
 - (A) either, so that the friend meets his God-given duty to the one who is suffering,
 - (B) or, that if the friend does not do this, then the sufferer may turn away from following God
 - (C) and really, it doesn't matter much which is correct
 - (D) because in either case, « *despair is a cry for a friend* »
- b. when someone is in a Job-like situation, whether he asks or not, it is an implicit call on his friends
 - (A) not to show judgment
 - (B) nor to explain just what is happening to him
 - (C) but simply to show kindness, love, tenderness, support, devotion, care, mercy, grace

D. Application

- 1. so, in these words today I find a two-fold message
- 2. the first is for anyone who this day is going through suffering; who is grieving, suffering the 4 D's

- a. this is a time to turn to friends
 - (A) now, some will fail and will disappoint
 - (1) but don't let this add to your discouragement
 - (2) because many people just do not know how to cope with despair
 - (B) some may be halting and clumsy in their efforts;
 - (1) but accept them as they are
 - (2) allow them to reach out in their love
- b. but the Bible tells us of a better Friend (Proverbs 18:24 NKJV) *"A man who has friends must himself be friendly, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."*
 - (A) one hymn-writer describes Him this way
 - Who can cheer the heart like Jesus,
 - By His presence all divine?
 - True and tender, pure and precious,
 - O how blest to call Him mine! ^{—{4}}.
 - (B) or as another one wrote
 - Come, ye disconsolate, where'er ye languish—
 - Come to the mercy-seat, fervently kneel;
 - Here bring your wounded hearts,
 - Here tell your anguish:
 - Earth has not sorrow that heav'n cannot heal. ^{—{5}}. «
 - (C) if there is time at this point, read Praise! 351, "No One Understands Like Jesus" by John W. Peterson »
- c. so here is an invitation from the best of friends
 - (A) which is made to those who believe in Christ and to those who are willing to come to Him in simple faith
 - (B) John 15:13–15 (NAS): *"Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends, if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you."*
 - (C) to such a One, then, you may safely cry out in your anguish, *"casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you."* (1 Peter 5:7 NAS)

3. the second is for you who know someone who is going through suffering; who is experiencing the 4 D's: despondency, despair, dejection, and depression
 - a. this is for you a reminder that « despair is a cry for a friend »
 - b. you will be a friend to such a person indeed if you reach out to them with your heart and be a living example of the love of Christ; a demonstration that "... the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us." (Romans 5:5b NAS)
 - c. when you hear that cry, don't listen with your head — not intellectually as Job's friends did so as to find fault — but listen with your heart, so that Christ may work through your life and actions to their healing

4. before concluding, let me read to you a few words on this subject by Ravi Zacharias by way of summary:
 - a. "Sometimes, sadly, as author Flannery O'Connor wrote when she herself was struggling with lupus: 'Sickness is a place... where there's no company, where nobody can follow.' —^{7}.
 - b. "Not so, when the friend you call upon is Jesus Christ. He offers not just words, but His presence. We see in His offer for strength that He Himself bore human suffering in his own flesh. Jesus walked the path of suffering and showed us how you can be in the will of God, even when God seems so distant. Why is that? Because the greatest of all suffering, of course, is to be separated from God Himself. When we return to fellowship with Him all other suffering finds a starting point for explanation.
 - c. "Let me ask you this, friend, what are you facing today? Or let me put it this way: are you perhaps, like Eliphaz, trying to be a friend to one in need? Do not underestimate the value of your presence near one who is hurting, and please do not despair because you may not know what to say. Sometimes, your caring presence is all one needs at their moment of grief.
 - d. "The message of Jesus is not one of stereotypical platitudes or of detached condemnation. He has promised that He is near those who seek Him and a present help in the time of suffering. You will find in Him a friend on whom you can cast all your care." — so ends Ravi's words.

5. for all of us, let us remember that there is a great peace to be found in the Lord in even the greatest anguish we may suffer; this is the theme of our closing hymn, "Be Still My Soul" (334)

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ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
NAS	New American Standard version © 1975 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

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2. Fredericksburg Bible Illustrations – Kerux illustrations #7951
3. “One Day!” by J. Wilbur Chapman (1859-1918)
4. “All That Thrills My Soul” by Thoro Harris (1874–1955) © renewed 1959 Mrs. Thoro Harris
5. “Come, Ye Disconsolate” by Thomas Moore (1779-1852)
6. “Canned Answers” from “A Slice of Infinity” by Ravi Zacharias – Kerux illustrations #17274
7. Mike Mason, The Gospel According to Job (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 84.