

**Considering Job  
(Week 3)  
Job 3-7  
“When Misery Doesn’t Love Company”**

**Introduction**

**“A bruised reed He will not break, and a smoldering wick He will not snuff out.  
In faithfulness He will bring forth justice.”** **Isaiah 42:3**

This is probably my most favorite verse of Scripture concerning The LORD Jesus Christ. What it means is simply this: Jesus will not kick you when you’re down. I LOVE that verse! We have a Savior that sympathizes with our hurts and weaknesses. I cannot begin to describe what a comfort that has been to me over the years, knowing that when I am weak, He is strong. I learned this truth many years ago in Sunday school when our teacher taught us all how to sing that wonderful old song “Jesus Loves Me”.

***“Jesus loves me this I know, for The Bible tells me so  
Little ones to Him belong. They are weak but He is strong.  
Yes, Jesus loves me, Yes, Jesus loves me,  
Yes, Jesus loves me. The Bible tells me so.”***

When Job’s friends arrived to “comfort” him in his time of weakness, the old man must have, at first, been so happy to see them. He soon realized, however, that they were only going to make matters worse. They sat and mourned with him in silence for seven long days and nights. To fully understand this, we need to understand the culture of Job’s era. It would have been considered impolite for these guests to speak before Job had spoken, so they waited for a full week until Job could suffer in silence no longer. He opened his mouth to curse the day he was born. Instead of comfort, these three friends decided that what Job really needed was some “preaching”. However, they couldn’t have been more inaccurate. What Job needed was to be comforted. He needed someone to sympathize with him. I read that someone once asked a little girl what was her definition of the word “sympathy”, to which she replied, **“Feeling someone else’s pain... in your heart.”**

That, my friends, is the perfect definition of sympathy. *The Bible* commands that we **“Rejoice with those who rejoice, and mourn with those who mourn” (Romans 12:15).** What a wonderful place The Church would be, if we truly obeyed this commandment. Job’s three friends would have been much better had they simply commiserated with him, but sadly, they thought it was their place to explain to him just why he was suffering. We often do the same, when we see the suffering of others. We feel the need to understand why it is happening. It’s our nature to want to understand the reason of every situation. Unfortunately, in Job’s case, not a single one of his friends had a clue as to why Job was being forced to endure such hardship. They had not been privy to the conversations before the heavenly throne. They had not heard God say that Job was the most righteous man on earth (**Job 1:8**). They all surmised (erroneously mind you), that Job must have done something terribly wrong in order to have been subjected to such harsh treatment. It was an easy assumption to make, but nothing could have been further from the truth.

Remember, that Satan wanted to incite Job to curse God. He had tried everything that he could possibly think of, and yet, he had one final trick up his sleeve. He pulled out the most powerful tool from his “toolbox”, the one that he wields with incredible ferocity. It is called “hopelessness”, and it has brought many a great man/woman to their knees. If the devil can get you to the point of hopelessness, then he can often break you completely. He finally had Job on the ropes, and now, he would use his three unwitting friends to try and bring the final “knockout punch”. Since Job considered himself a religious man, then Satan would use religious people to bring him down! It was an excellent strategy, and it almost worked... almost. Today, we will see Job being tested by his own friends, the very ones who came to offer their support, but instead would leave him Hopeless, Harassed, and Helpless.

**Hopeless (Chapter 3)**

The book of *Job* is very poetic in nature. When Job finally begins to speak in chapter three, the language is intensely expressive filled with emotion and imagery. The entire chapter can be summed up in one single sentence: "I wish I were dead". Job has reached such a point of despair that he no longer thinks that he can bear it. He curses the day that he was born and wishes that he had died at birth. At least then, he surmises, that he would be at peace. It is incredible how, when we endure hardship, that we seem to forget all the good things that we have enjoyed in the past. Job had indeed had a very bad year, but prior to that, he had truly lived the life of a blessed man. Suffering can cause us to forget the good days and captivates the full weight of our attention only to the here and now. Job's reaction to his turmoil, while understandable, is in truth an overreaction. If he had only been able to recall how many wonderful days he had spent with his wife and children, I sincerely doubt that he would truly wish that he had never been born. But sadly, that is what happens when hopelessness is allowed to have its way.

Job believed that he was dying, and he simply wished it to be over. He believed that God was unfairly chastising him, and he would rather have died than be forced to endure it any longer.

**"Why is life given to a man whose path is hidden, whom God has hedged in? I sigh when food is put before me, and my groans pour out like water. For the thing I feared has overtaken me, and what I dreaded has happened to me. I cannot relax or be calm; I have no rest, for turmoil has come."** **Job 3:23-26**

I have seen this so many times before. You stand at the foot of someone's hospital bed and see that they have become too weary to fight anymore. They have resigned themselves to death. Gone is the hope of recovery and renewed strength. No longer is death something to be dreaded, but rather it is something to be embraced. Job doesn't understand why that he is suffering, but he is convinced that he can withstand no more. He is no longer interested in eating to keep up his strength. He simply wishes that the end would come, and he could finally be at peace. It is in times like these, that a man welcomes the loving encouragement of his family and friends. Job would not receive it from either.

I recently read an article about the Church in China. It seems that the Chinese government has recently stepped up its persecution of Christians in that country. They have seized their church buildings and have ordered them to disburse, even casting some of the church leaders in prison. It seems that the government is afraid that Christianity will cause people to speak out against the atrocities being perpetrated by the leaders of China's brutal communist regime. Persecution of Christianity is nothing new in China, but for quite a few years now, the government has actually allowed the church to operate with little or no interference. But, as of late, the persecution of the church has returned with a vengeance.

The article that I read was quite interesting. It said that church members had reacted in three different ways. One group who are more familiar with "western culture" (that's us by the way) have reacted in anger against the government. Speaking out and complaining about the human rights violations and demanding change.

The second group are those who have become despondent. They see no way that the church will be able to continue, with no church facilities in which to meet, and no church programs to implement. This group has pretty much given up on the gospel and are resigning themselves to hopelessness.

The third group is far more interesting. They see this as a work of The Holy Spirit and have accepted the persecution as being sent from God. They have started meeting in each others homes just as the first Church did in the book of *Acts*. This group has seen an increase in salvations, and new leadership in the Church stepping up to preach the gospel with a renewed passion. These believers actually say that they are more excited about the gospel of Jesus Christ than ever before, and they actually have no desire to return to the "old way"! Think about that for a moment. These sold out Chinese brothers and sisters in Christ actually **prefer** their persecuted status to the time when they were simply going through the motions in their safe church buildings! They see it as a work of God! I can almost imagine the scene in heaven with The LORD asking Satan, "Have you considered my servants in China?" We have no way of knowing what God is doing sometimes, but this one thing we must always remember as we are facing the oncoming storm:

***"We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to His purpose."*** ***Romans 8:28***

Hang in there Job. God has a plan, and one day it will all make perfect sense to you. Don't lose hope in the midst the storm.

### **Harassed (Chapters 4-5)**

His name was Eliphaz, meaning "My God is fine gold", and boy, was this guy ever impressed with himself! He was a descendant of Esau, and he had traveled quite a long way to see Job's sufferings for himself. Like his two companions, he had sat silently, patiently waiting for Job to speak so that he could put in his two cents. Eliphaz was most likely the eldest in the group, since he was allowed to speak first. Or perhaps he is just one of those people who can't wait to "have the floor" as it were. We have all known the type. They cannot wait for you to finish speaking, so that they can impress you with their wisdom and knowledge. He was charismatic in his style and gives the impression that if we only knew what he knows, if we only could attain the level of spirituality that he has achieved, then we would really be something!

Most of us in the Church have had an encounter with an "Eliphaz". In fact, truth be told, many of us have been wounded by one. There are two things that I have learned in my thirty years of ministry. First, there is a God, and Second... I'm not Him. I really believe that the more you learn about The LORD the less you will be impressed with yourself. At least that has been true in my case. God is awesome, and His ways are unsearchable, and I am more than a little afraid of people who seem to think that they have Him "all figured out". We have been given The Word of God so that we may know the things that God has revealed to us about Himself. I believe that the truths found in God's Word are indisputable, but as far as the so called "deep truths" that other so called "prophets" claim to know that cannot be found in Holy Scripture, I pay little heed.

Eliphaz, was just such a "prophet", who claimed that he had divine revelation from God. He told Job that there was no possible way that he would be enduring such suffering if he had not sinned, and therefore, brought judgment down upon himself. He didn't say this outright, but he certainly insinuated it. Job's other friends would prove to be far less subtle than Eliphaz, but their message would prove to be similar. None of these men could begin to imagine a righteous man suffering as a test of his faith. They didn't understand God nearly as much as they thought they did. Just listen to the words of Eliphaz:

***"Should anyone try to speak to you when you are exhausted? Yet who can keep from speaking?"*** ***Job 4:2***

What he was saying in essence was, "Job I realize that you are having a rough time here, and you probably don't feel up to a sermon right now, but I'm going to preach you one anyway." Now that's what we all want when we are laying on our deathbed right? Nothing makes a man feel better than having someone point out all his faults when he's suffering, now is there? The problem was, Eliphaz didn't actually know about any of Job's faults, he just assumed that he must have had some dandies. He accuses Job of not being able to handle the truth.

***"Indeed, you have instructed many and have strengthened weak hands, Your words have steadied the one who was stumbling and braced the knees that were buckling. But now that this has happened to you, you have become exhausted. It strikes you, and you are dismayed. Isn't your piety your confidence, and the integrity of your life your hope?"*** ***Job 4:3-6***

Eliphaz is in essence saying, "Oh you were so very spiritual when everything was going your way, but now look how far you have fallen from the faith!" Wow, if this is the only kind of friends that I am allowed to have, I'd just as soon be a hermit. Eliphaz prattles on and on for two whole chapters explaining to Job that everyone who faces suffering like he has is most certainly being punished by God for some sin.

**“Consider: Who has perished when he Was innocent? Where have the honest been destroyed? In my experience those who plow injustice and those who sow trouble reap the same.”** **Job 4:7-8**

The devil was sure getting his money's worth out of good ol' Eliphaz. He pretty much accused Job of being a crook. He had no evidence mind you, but that didn't stop him from ripping into Job's character. I heard an old preacher say once, "The Church is the only organization that shoots its wounded." Truth! How many times have you faced some struggle in your life only to have some self righteous blowhard make it worse for you? God help us when we show condemnation for those who are in pain. Jesus would never do this, and neither should we. Remember that verse? Jesus will never kick you when your down. Would to God that His people would show more compassion. Some of the things that Eliphaz says to Job are actually true in general, but he misapplies them to Job's suffering.

I especially love how Eliphaz claims to have seen a vision from The Almighty in the night. He builds it up so much that we are left anticipating some incredible revelation in **verses 12-16**, only to say,

**“Can a mortal be more righteous than God?”**

**Job 4:17**

Wow Eliphaz! Now that's some deep stuff. I believe that everyone in the room knew that already! That's not really some new revelation. I love how J. Vernon McGhee described this passage, "the build up was so intense, and then the actual 'revelation' was so insignificant that it was like a mountain going into labor and giving birth to a mouse!" I love Dr. McGhee. When I get to heaven, he's one of the guys that I would like to spend some time with. But I digress.

Eliphaz really didn't have anything pertinent to say to Job, he only managed to discourage him further. Job had gone from hopeless, to harassed, and then finally to helpless. The very ones who could and should have helped Job had offered him no help at all. The devil had used a "religious" man to bring down a righteous one. Now, who would have ever thought of that? Don't forget that it was the "religious ones" that called for Christ to be Crucified. We must never allow ourselves to become religious judges, rather than compassionate children of God longing to show the love of Christ to a dying world. Remember the words of that old preacher I was telling you about: "The Church is the only organization that shoots it wounded." In scripture, the devil is known as "the accuser and The Holy Spirit is called "The Comforter". Which one speaks through you?

### **Helpless (5-7)**

Job's despair is only multiplied after listening to the council of Eliphaz. He tries to get his friends to comprehend the level of suffering that he has been forced to endure, but they are too busy judging him. The more he cries out, the more they make him feel like he is only getting what he deserves. He tries to explain to Eliphaz that he understands that God has allowed him to suffer, but he doesn't know why. He compares the "preaching of Eliphaz" to food that has no taste.

**“Is bland food eaten without salt? Is there any flavor in an egg white? I refuse to touch them; they are like contaminated food. If only my request would be granted and God would provide what I hope for: that He would decide to crush me, to unleash His power and cut me off! It would still bring me comfort, and I would leap for joy in unrelenting pain that I have not denied the words of The Holy One.”**

**Job 6:6-10**

Job longs for God to simply finish him off, while he still can maintain his integrity. He knows that he is innocent, but he cannot hold out much longer. He cannot help but complain, for his suffering is so great. Once again, he is simply longing for a little understanding from his friends, but they have left him feeling helpless. God is keeping silent, and they have given him nothing to ease his burden. Job feels alone, more alone than he has ever felt in his life. He cries out to his friends what a disappointment they are to him in his time of desperation.

**"My brothers are as treacherous as a wadi, as seasonal streams that overflow and become darkened because of ice, and the snow melts into them. The wadis evaporate in warm weather; they disappear from their channels in hot weather. Caravans turn away from their routes, go up into the desert and perish. The caravans of Tema look for these streams. The traveling merchants of Sheba hope for them. They are ashamed because they had been confident of finding water. When they arrive there, they are disappointed. So this is what you have become to me."**  
**Job 6: 15-21**

In very powerful poetic language, Job describes how useless his friends have become to him. They are like a mirage in the dessert. What Job had been thirsting for was some refreshing words of comfort, and they had produced nothing to quench his thirst. When he had first seen them approach, it was like a vision of an oasis in the desert, but when they drew near, he saw that the stream had dried up. This should be a reminder to us all that people are looking to the Church to provide the answers that quench their spiritual thirst. If we provide only judgment and condescension while withholding hope, they go away just as thirsty as they came.

Job reminded his friends that he had never asked them for anything (**6:22-23**), but he needed them now. He told them, if they knew of something that he had done wrong to please tell him and he would repent (**vs.24-30**), but they had no idea. All they had to offer were theories and suppositions.

In chapter seven, we see Job falling into deep despair, longing for death. He can find no relief from the torment and is convinced that his life will soon be over. Once more, he prays for God to leave him to die.

**"I give up! I will not live forever. Leave me alone, for my days are a breath."**  
**Job 7:16**

He goes on to ask God to show him his sin, so that he can repent and ask forgiveness, but heaven is silent. Have you ever felt like that? Have you ever felt alone and helpless, and God seems to be silent when you pray? Maybe some of you feel that way right now. I have been there, and I can tell you this; even when God seems distant, He is there. God had not abandoned Job. He was merely waiting for just the right time to reveal Himself. God will always show up at just the right time. He always has, and He always will. In difficult times, we must understand that God sees what we are going through. King David was no stranger to hard times. In **Psalm 56**, David wrote a beautiful verse that I find comforting in times of trouble, when I feel alone and helpless, and God seems to be far away.

**"You Yourself have recorded my wanderings. Put my tears in Your bottle. Are they not in your book?"**  
**Psalm 56:8**

You see, our God never leaves us alone for a second. He sees our sufferings and even keeps a record of every tear that we cry! That is how precious we are to Him. He will **never** leave us alone. Job may have felt abandoned, but he certainly was not. God kept a record of everything that he endured, and that same God was committed to make it up to Job when the time of testing was over. If you belong to Jesus, He will do the same for you. Don't lose hope, even when everything falls apart and friends and loved ones turn their backs on you. God loves you, and He wants the very best for you. Abide in His love, and all things will work together for good. Do you believe that? Then never doubt in the dark what God has taught you in the light!

And ALL of God's people said... TRUTH!!