

Job 1: Faith in Hard Times (4/12/11)

INTRO

- Mountain biking story – glorious stars against the blackest night sky – same sky as in the city, but see more glory by contrast
- Good news: God is good. Bad news: Times are hard, and will likely get harder.
- Tough message. Bad news – harder... Good news – better than you thought!
- But bad news shows off the glory of the good, like darkest night shows off the stars; velvet shows off the glory of a diamond.
- Bible is real, deals with difficult questions of suffering

JOB 1

- Character – godly, conscientious, good looking, wealthy, greatest person in the world...and he's taken!! Sickening... "untouchable!"
 - Fastforward... he is suffering terribly.
 - No relationship to his life. Not talking about sin-related suffering – that sits with our understanding of justice. But suffering that comes to the blameless, the godly, with no reason.
 - World gives us no answers to why → Look at heaven.
 - Heavenly court: Created beings, incl Satan, before the Creator (not equal/opposite to God).
 - God initiates with Job
 - "Of course he has faith! He has everything he needs! Take it and he will curse you."
 - Normal working day – Destruction. (in isolation, every day risk)
 - Food stores – Destruction.
 - Normal Family Gathering – Destruction.
- All areas of his life, in which he could have placed his security. **HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND??**

Response – the True making of a man, not what he has – under the lens of intense suffering, truth of a man

- Not possession, but action, which flow from the heart, true identity, showing what he values
1. Grief (men and emotions)
 - It's ok to grieve – not stoics, glibly "praise God anyway!" – sympathise

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- Jesus wept, though he knew he would raise Lazarus
- Hairs on head. Bruised reed. Every tear you cried...

2. Humility to worship

- Worship! Stark contrast to Satan's expectations
- Knows that he has nothing – it is all God's
- Knows who he is & who God is
- Life is a vapour – temporary, yet what matters is eternal
- Our tough year – 2 Cor 4:16-18

3. Unshakeable faith in a Sovereign God

- 2 from people, 2 from "acts of God"
- Acknowledges that God has done it! Not Satan (and Job did not sin!)
- Yet apportioned no blame!
- Through gritted teeth, and tears pouring down his face and the deep pain of losing it all so suddenly and inexplicably.... "Bless you Lord!"
- What is his secret??
 - Anchored. Character, v1-5
 - Where is this man's treasure?!
 - Grief does not control him – sweep him aside.
- Things are going to get worse before they get better for Job. Wife, friends, bitterness, questions...

Times are hard

- Recession, unemployment, riots, apathy, strikes, taxes, bills, illness, tiredness, death
- Atheism, persecution, ridicule
- Get worse....?

We need Anchor, Ballast, Rock, Lifeline

We are not wimpy, fair-weather Christians who fall away when the going gets tough

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Give you some ballast...

Romans 8:31-39

- “If God is for us, who can be against us?!”
- Answer??
- Careful... whole list of stuff coming! We boldly sing out the Redman/Tomlin song...but Satan doesn't like it!

Good news: Who can lay a charge...? God has justified!! There is no higher court to which people can go to accuse you!

- Match fixers...
- Satan = Accuser (like in Job)

Good news: Who condemns...? Jesus has paid the price! Punishment! (*gospel*)

Bad news: Opposition will rise up.

Good news: NOTHING can separate us from God's love!!!

THAT is our anchor!! We are in CHRIST!!! FOREVER!!!

- Who can be against us?? Ultimately, no one can touch us! Temporarily, Satan and people will touch us.
- In all these things we are more than conquerors
- More than conqueror?? Enter them with victory already won

GOD IS SOVEREIGN OVER IT ALL!!

Back to Job:

- Satan has to ask God's permission to touch us, and he cannot overstretch his permit
- God is good. Romans 8:28, all things for good...
- If so, if loves to give good gifts, bless, life in all its fullness, then if he permits these things to happen to us it MUST be for some purpose – our good, His glory.
- He will not let you go through anything that you cannot stand up under in Him
- One step further.... He ORDAINS it. He can do so without blame. (Job)

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- God did it to win a public victory over Satan for His glory.

Just say this final thing about Job:

- Job didn't get an answer to Why. But he did get a deeper understanding of God.
- "My ears had heard...now my eyes have seen" (42:5)
- Everything restored – maybe we will in this life, maybe not. He still departed this world naked.

The Bible has so much more to say on this issue

- Jesus said these things would come to us
- Do not be surprised at the fiery trial (Peter)
- Grace is sufficient, power made perfect in weakness (Paul)
- Consider it pure joy! (James)
- Refining process

Where are you today?

- God knows what you are going through – both as omniscient Lord of Universe, and man who came to earth to suffer.
- Entrusted us with his reputation – how will you handle your suffering? The world is watching us. Everyone is joyful and secure in the good times. How we handle suffering is one of our most distinctive qualities. This was Satan's challenge to God regarding Job.

Promise of Security is for those who are saved.

- Advent
- Jesus came to suffer
- To demonstrate and buy for us the security of His eternal love
- Nothing can separate you from the love of God!!
- Bad news is that your pain is not over in this life; Good news is better!