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Job 42

midweekchurch

Job 6 (mid)

You might not have heard of a lady called Corrie ten Boom, but she and her sister Betsy lived in Europe during the second world war. And so when Hitler decided that he wanted to wipe all the Jews off the face of the earth, Corrie and Betsy were deeply troubled. You see they were Christians and they hated to see any group treated so badly, so they used their house as a hiding place, so Jews could hide. And eventually they smuggled them out of the country and to safety.

They saved hundreds of men, women and children that way, but they were eventually caught and put into Ravensbruck concentration Camp in Germany. There along with ten thousand other women, they endured horrible, degrading, lice ridden conditions....

One day they were leading a Bible study, when one of the other women started yelling at them from her bunk. After a constant stream of abuse, she came up to the sisters and shouted at them "*Why? If your God is such a good God, why does he allow this type of suffering?*"

And as she said this, she dramatically tore off the bandages and the old rags that bound her hands. Everyone saw her broken mangled hands and fingers. Then she told them "*I'm the first violinist of the German Symphony Orchestra. So did your God do this?*"

They are good questions aren't they? What is God's place in our suffering? Could he stop it? Is he behind it? And why? Why does he allow bad things to happen to good people? For these are the questions that we have been asking throughout the book of Job. These are the issues that we have been seeking an answer for.

And last week we saw that God appeared to Job. He told him he does know his story. He told him he is in control of the whole world, and that ultimately his plan is good. "Trust me", he says. "You may not know everything about the world, but I do." And without telling him the reasons why, he leaves Job still in misery, still in poverty, still without friends and without family.

So how will Job respond? What will happen in the end? How does our story finish? We now turn to the last chapter of the book, and try and draw some of the threads together. And the first thing that we notice is that Job repents.

**1. Repentance** "Then Job replied to the LORD in 42:3 "*Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. "You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall*

*answer me.' My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."*

Now Job doesn't repent of some sin prior to his suffering, so the friends have been proved wrong on that one. He repents of speaking without understanding. Before he complained to God that he was unjust in sending his suffering. Now he praises God, "*I know that you can do all things, no plan of yours can be thwarted.*" Before he was telling God what he should be doing. Now he realises he spoke of things he didn't understand, of things to wonderful to know. He admits that his knowledge was deficient, not Gods.

Before he thought he knew God. Now he has seen God. And his God has become bigger and bigger before him. His previous God was too small, too weak, too puny, but now he knows in the words of the kids chorus, "*that his God is so big, so strong and so mighty, there is nothing that God cannot do.*"

Before Job was sitting in his dust and ashes. Now he turns away from his position of mourning and he is ready to start again with life. Sure his troubles, his pain, his suffering that had swamped him, they're still there, but now he is ready to accept them. He is ready to move on with life. He has a sense of closure and he is ready to start afresh.

You see Job's suffering has allowed his vision of God to grow. He now knows God better. He now has seen God's power and love and compassion. He now has had a great weight lifted off his shoulders, for if God is that awesome, if he is even able to bring good out of Job's suffering. Then Job doesn't have to be in control any more, he can leave his case to someone more dependable, someone more trustworthy than he can even imagine.

It reminds me of what happened on Feb 24, 1989. United Airlines Flight 811 from Honolulu, Hawaii to Auckland, New Zealand, had just reached 22,000 feet. It was passing through some thunderstorms, when suddenly there was a tremendous decompression explosion as an 11-by-20-foot opening was ripped on the right side of the plane. Apparently, a cargo door had not been properly closed or a latch on the door was faulty. Nine people were sucked from the jet to their deaths over the Pacific Ocean.

Now can you imagine being a fellow passenger on that plane? Well there were another 345 of them. But also on board that day was Captain David M. Cronin. He was due to take mandatory retirement at age 60 in less than a month. But that day he managed to get the plane back to Honolulu, using everything he knew from 38 years of flying. He dealt with the loss of two of his four engines, a stuck right wing flap, and a huge hole in the

side of the plane which sent tornado-like winds through the plane, shaking it violently. The plane's landing was gentle and took only 2/3's of the runways.

For friends, when there is a major crisis in the air, you want the right person at the controls of a jumbo jet! So how much more, when there is a crisis in your life, that you can't handle, do you want someone trustworthy in control of the universe? So here in the last chapter of the book, Job turns from his pride and acknowledges that God is wonderfully in control.

**2. Prayer** But Job doesn't just repent, he does something else, he prays. And its interesting to note whom he prays for. He actually prays for Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, his friends, who have spent the last 40 chapters trying to convince Job to repent. And in a very interesting twist, Job actually prays for their forgiveness, because what they had said to him was rubbish and the manner in which they spoke was without compassion.

Now think of Job for a second will you? He is still in the midst of his suffering. He has been hurt terribly by these friends and now while he is still in his pain, he has do something for the very people who have hurt him. Now why would God ask Job to do something like that?

Could it be to get his mind off his own problems? Could it be so that Job has a chance to care for others who are now down? Could it be that Job and his friends need to be reconciled? Could it be that God is using Job's faith in the midst of suffering, to help other people's faith? Will Job's prayer allow those around him to see how true believers can still love and care for others even in the midst of great pain and sorrow?

I was talking a while back with a man who was wrongly accused & convicted of a major crime. He was innocent and the facts all pointed in that direction but in the climate of the court case he was wrongfully convicted. He went to some of the worst jails in our State - he was treated shamefully by other prisoners and by some guards. But he was a Christian and he used the time to speak to his fellow in mates, at times leading services and Bible studies. And the Lord allowed him to lead a couple of people to Christ in that time.

Those people are thankful for that man's wrong conviction. You see many prisoners saw God's love first hand because of that man's suffering. And when he was talking to me he said - it was through that horrible, horrible time that I got to know God much better.

Now lets stop there for a moment shall we? Maybe, just maybe our pain, our suffering can bring us to a point where we see God more clearly.

Maybe, when our world falls apart, we will have to come to the point where we agree we are not in control, but God somehow is. Maybe, just maybe, our pain will lead us to a greater understanding of God's love, and even others will see our faith and respond to God's love.

**3. Grace** So in this last chapter we have seen repentance, prayer and now lastly grace. Because after Job repents & after he prays for his friends, the Lord graciously gives him back a life. He makes him prosperous again. Whereas before he had 7000 sheep now the Lord gives him 14,000. Before he had 3,000 camels now he is given 6000. Over time he acquires 1000 yoke of oxen and 1000 donkeys, he raises 7 sons and 3 daughters and those daughters include a young Jemimah, or Jemma for short, who are described as the most beautiful girls in the land. I know what he means.

His family that have left him alone now join with him in meals and he lives for another 140 years. Wow, its almost too good to be true, isn't it? And I know we love a happy ending - you know one where the boy gets the girl, the money comes rolling in, they walk into the beautiful setting sun and they all live happily ever after, but this ending takes the cake doesn't it? The cake, the cream, and the after dinner mints as well.

For Job 42 tells us that God graciously deals with Job in the end. So much so that he is in a better situation at the end than he was at the beginning. So why does God do this?

Is it because of Job's faithfulness? Did Job get the goodies as a pay back for all the bad things that he had to endure? No that would be the flip side to saying that Job suffered because of his sins. That would say that what happens to us is still linked to our good points and our bad points and the author has spoken against this throughout the whole book.

No God doesn't give him these good things because Job deserved it, he gives them to him because he is gracious. Sure he might allow tough times to come, but ultimately he is a God of grace, a good God, a God who loves to shower blessings upon all his children, those who believe in him as well as those who don't. A God who doesn't treat us as our sins deserve but graciously loves us, forgives us & always, always cares for us.

You see maybe, just maybe one of the reasons that this book is here, one of the reasons that both tough times and good times come to us is to show us that God doesn't treat us according to rewards, he treats us according to his grace. For isn't that how we are saved? We are not saved by what we do, we are saved by what Jesus has done. We are not saved by works, we are saved by grace through faith.

So will this fairy tale happen to us? Will we receive double for our suffering, will we see our God appear to us in our tough times? Will we end up at the end of our lives with more than we had at the beginning?

Well we might, but we might not. We might continue to see God graciously look after us here on this earth, but we might have to wait. For if we don't see it in this life, we will certainly see that gracious side of God in the next life. Where we will enjoy a time where there is no more pain, no more death, no more suffering, no more loneliness but an eternity spent with a gracious God and a wonderful Christian family.

As the apostle Paul says in Romans "*I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.*" (Repeat) You see what we go through in this life will be fully compensated. We know that because the last word in Job is about God being a gracious God.

So where have we got with the book of Job? Well we haven't got the answers to all our questions, have we? We haven't found a way to avoid suffering ourselves either. But we have seen a godly man hang on to his faith, despite awful pain who now has an enlarged view of who God is and how wise and good and gracious he is.

And we have discovered that life really is a mystery. For both the book of Job and life itself can be at times confusing and at other times surprising. Unexpected things do happen. Long periods of struggle and anguish and grieving do occur. And there are times where we wish that God would tell us more about what is in fact going on.

But in the same way that God never tells Job what is going on, he often doesn't tell us either. And it's frustrating that he doesn't, but that is just the way life is. But through all this mystery, it reminds us that living life to the full is not a matter of knowing why things happen, it's a matter of knowing the God who knows why things happen.

Thus what the book of Job is all about, is not to answer the question why? Instead it is asking us *when*. *When* these things happen to us are we going to use the tough times to get to know God better? *When* life falls apart are we going to say how can Jesus help me in my struggles? *When* I feel that no one else is there, will I remain faithful to God, will I trust him *when* bad things happen because knowing God is more valuable than not suffering?

You know when Corrie ten Boom was in that Nazi Concentration Camp and that lady ripped off the bandages and asked her "why? Is your God behind all this?" There was a moment when no one dared to say anything.

Then Corrie came up to the lady and said "*We can't answer that question. All we know is that our God came to this earth and became one of us, and he suffered with us and he was crucified and he died. And that he did it for love.*"

God is love. God is gracious. And to deliver that love and that grace to you, he allowed his own son to suffer horribly and die, a suffering that was greater than any of us can ever imagine. God does care. He does understand. And no matter what life tells you, you can trust him because above everything else He is a gracious and loving God. So today and every day, put your hand into his hand and you will find out how loving and gracious he really is.