I Get By With A Little Help From My Friends

Text: Job 4–31
Main Idea: God will not be put in a box of our own making.

INTRODUCTION – What if Job had been an influence upon Joe Cocker?
- late Joe Cocker, British blues/soul/rock singer
- one of his songs may have sounded like this:

What would you do if I lost everything,
Would you stand up and walk out on me?
What would you do with a life that's so dark,
Would you hold back your sympathy?
I get by despite the help from my friends.
I get by despite the help from my friends.

Been considering this story of Job
- greatest man of his time and even region
- blameless, upright, fears God, shuns evil
- and yet he has suffered, perhaps like no other man but One
- Job is left in the dark as far as the reasons go
- we've been given ch. 1 & 2, but not Job; never told of this
- Job, in spite of his goodness, greatness and righteousness, loses it all
- possessions, properties, family & health
- we know Satan was involved; he was seeking to test God, in truth, not Job
- but God puts Job thru this to test him: his faith, his love, his worship
- God will show that one can love, worship & serve God simply for God's glory

Last week, we spent time in the darkness of ch. 3
- Job's light has nearly gone out, only faintest glimmer, 3.20
- **"Why is light given to him who is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul**
- left him alone in this darkness, even though three friends there with him
- you'll recall, behavior of these friends was that of a funeral

Now come to longest section of book: the dialogues
- Eliphaz, Bildad & Zophar heard Job's lament in ch. 3
- they can no longer just sit there & keep silent; they MUST speak
- and so they do

1560, Geneva Bible was published
- one of first English Bibles published
- 50 years prior to King James Bible's publication
- prologue to Job reads:

In this history is set before our eyes the example of a singular patience. For this holy man Job was not only extremely afflicted in outward things and in his body, but also

in his mind and conscience, by the sharp temptations of his wife, and chief friends; which, by their vehement words and subtle disputations, brought him almost to despair…. These friends came unto him under pretense of consolation, and yet they tormented him more than did all his affliction. Notwithstanding he did constantly resist them, and at length, had good success.

We now enter into these dialogues

- want to cover them quickly, giving an overview this morning
- hope to challenge you to read through them over the next few weeks
- but for now, so we don't get bogged down in finer details, let's take the bird's eye view

And what we start with is this…

I. What We Have Here Is A Failure to Communicate

- three friends are not clones of each other
- while say same things in similar ways, still approach Job differently
- as we begin this overview, we'll see communication problems
- to quote Strother Martin, "What we've got here is failure to communicate"

1. **Friends not impressed with Job**
   - hear tone from Bildad in **8.2**
   - **"How long will you say these things, and the words of your mouth be a great wind?**
   - Eliphaz, who started with some sense of concern, jumps in: **15.2–3**
   - **"Should a wise man answer with windy knowledge,**
     and fill his belly with the east wind?
     Should he argue in unprofitable talk,
     or in words with which he can do no good?
   - Zophar joins the fray, perhaps coldest words yet: **11.2–3**

"Should a multitude of words go unanswered,
and a man full of talk be judged right?
Should your babble silence men,
and when you mock, shall no one shame you?

   - then Zophar wishes God would intervene: **11.5**

But oh, that God would speak
and open his lips to you,

   - it's not that they're not moved at suffering, but can't understand
   - can't understand Job's insistence upon innocence and purity
   - we'll come back to this in a moment

2. **Job not impressed either**
   - Job may have been hopeful of some comfort when three older friends arrived
   - once they start talking, however, that hope flies quickly away
   - pattern is Eliphaz, probably oldest, speaks first, then Job replies
   - then Bildad and Zophar in turn, each time followed by Job
   - Job sometimes responds directly to each one
   - as debate rages on, his responses are more directed to heaven
   - Job's hope is that God will finally speak & answer him

• Job's thoughts on his friends are evident
• **6.14**: they don't seem to fear God; taking His name in vain by way they speak of God

"He who withholds kindness from a friend
forsakes the fear of the Almighty.

• **6.15**: no help what so ever; actually drains him dry with their words

My brothers are treacherous as a torrent-bed,
as torrential streams that pass away,

• **16.2–3**: miserable windbags!

"I have heard many such things;
miserable comforters are you all.
Shall windy words have an end?
Or what provokes you that you answer?

• **12.2**: sanctified sarcasm here used as proper rebuke

"No doubt you are the people,
and wisdom will die with you.

3. **God is not impressed with Job's comforters**
   • ch. 4–27 debate rages on, intensifies with each round
   • ch 28–31 feature Job's conclusions, seeking to end this row
   • many read this poetic exchange & wonder: who won? Who was right?
   • God settles this for them…for us: **42.7**

After the Lord had spoken these words to Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite: "My anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.

   • Job's frustration & anger is merely echo of God's attitude toward these men

4. **Question: So, is reading this just a waste of time?**
   • are all these exchanges just rubbish?
   • that would make it easy: just ignore it, read the intro & the ending; go on
   • what is needed is to see how Job's friends speak the truth
   • and how they so greatly misuse it
   • see how they take the truth and get it wrong in so many ways

This might lead us to wonder…

II. Does Theology Even Matter?

• there is a way of viewing the world evident in Job & his friends
• they view the world as an orderly place
• after all, God is a god of order & created world with order in it
• chaos is that which seeks to upset God's good order
• Leviathan, mentioned in ch. 3 & 41, represents that chaos
• yet even this beast is under God's complete, sovereign control

1. **So, what is the theologically ordered view of the universe, life, and everything?**

   1) God is absolutely in control

- He is completely sovereign
- this is one of the fundamental truths in ch. 1 & 2

2) God is absolutely just and fair

3) *Therefore* He <u>always</u> punishes wickedness & blesses righteousness
   - He always does this: in this life & in the hereafter
   - in Job & friends' thinking, God can never act against this truth

4) *Therefore*, if I suffer I <u>must</u> have sinned & am being punished for my wrongs

2. Examples of this worldview expressed in these dialogues

- Eliphaz: **4.7**, then **5.17–27**

"Remember: who that was innocent ever perished?
Or where were the upright cut off?

- valid argument: <u>assuming</u> Job has sinned!
- Bildad really helps in **8.4–7**!

If your children have sinned against him,
he has delivered them into the hand of their transgression.
If you will seek God
and plead with the Almighty for mercy,
if you are pure and upright,
surely then he will rouse himself for you
and restore your rightful habitation.
And though your beginning was small,
your latter days will be very great.

- Zophar holds the same truth & blatantly makes it known: **11.6b**

Know then that God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves.

- for these three, unless God is just & fair and ALWAYS operates this way: chaos!
- no room in thinking for anything else; can't imagine it
- Eliphaz: so frustrated w/ Job's insistence of purity, he starts making things up!
- **22.5–9**

Is not your evil abundant?
There is no end to your iniquities.
For you have exacted pledges of your brothers for nothing
and stripped the naked of their clothing.
You have given no water to the weary to drink,
and you have withheld bread from the hungry.
The man with power possessed the land,
and the favored man lived in it.
You have sent widows away empty,
and the arms of the fatherless were crushed.

3. Are they right? Or, are they wrong?

- true: God is absolutely in control
- true: God is just and fair

- and yes, sometimes we suffer due to our sin
- if I drink & drive while drunk crash & am injured — it's **my** fault
- if wife commits adultery and misery & divorce ensue — **her** fault
- yet, consider Job: blameless, upright, fears God, turns away from evil
- no need for him to repent
- so, we must avoid the friends way of thinking
- we must put aside their box of preconceived conclusions

So, what are we to think?

III. "Don't Use That Tone of Voice With Me!"

- when younger, my sister, 2 years my senior, and I would sometimes fight: argue
- we'd try to blame the other, attempt to defend ourselves
- whine about how unfairly we were being treated by mother if disciplined
- this is what she'd tell us!
- Job's friends like this: can't imagine anything outside theological box of orderliness
- tradition is on their side: **8.8–10**

"For inquire, please, of bygone ages,
and consider what the fathers have searched out.
For we are but of yesterday and know nothing,
for our days on earth are a shadow.
Will they not teach you and tell you
and utter words out of their understanding?

- so their view must be true, right?
- here's where they're wrong, however

1. **No Honesty**
   - tradition not necessarily a bad thing: if prepared to be set aside when needful
   - Job's situation demands friends' view be put aside
   - they must, because God's truth always fits God's world, but not always theirs or ours
   - their theology is mostly true: just forced in way which doesn't work

2. **No Sympathy**
   - Eliphaz shows brief glimpse: **4.2–5**

Job 4:2

"If one ventures a word with you, will you be impatient?
Yet who can keep from speaking?
Behold, you have instructed many,
and you have strengthened the weak hands.
Your words have upheld him who was stumbling,
and you have made firm the feeble knees.
But now it has come to you, and you are impatient;
it touches you, and you are dismayed.

- but none of three can understand Job's pain
  - Job's pain is the misery of the righteous who suffer, not the guilty
  - friends would rather be right theologically than be true comforters

3. **No Love**
   - doesn't take interpretive genius to see they really don't love Job
   - they don't listen, their arguments are truly one-sided, and that side is theirs
   - they refuse to engage with Job as friend or even as fellow human being

IV. So, What's Wrong Here?

- many things they say are good and true, if taken out of context
- might score high marks on theology exam
- but they would fail as pastors: no real care for the person or the soul
- problem seen more in what they **DON'T** say

1. No Satan

- we see Satan in ch. 1 & 2, but never again
- friends don't acknowledge an evil one at all in any of their words
- you & I know we're in a spiritual battle: **Ephesians 6.12**

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

- problem for friends: take no account of spiritual forces of evil around us

2. No Waiting

- you sin = you suffer — right now!
- this is worldview of Eliphaz, Bildad & Zophar
- but in Scripture, promises of judgment most frequently yet to come
- judgment is usually in the future

• friends' theology, while having it's truth, is far too simplistic

• God is like cosmic vending machine:

• put in sin, receive judgment

• put in righteousness, receive blessing

• think of Jesus' parable of wheat & weeds in Matthew 13

• must wait until harvest – the final judgment – to separate them out

• yes, we reap what we sow — just not immediately in many cases

• no real reason to trust a personal God in this view

• almost pure moralism: no love, no joy, no desire for God's glory

• just avoid suffering & pursue blessing

Probably many other things wrong with friends' arguments, but this brings us home:

CONCLUSION – Shadow of the Cross on every page of Old Testament

• already seen how Job points us to Another who is coming

• this One will suffer even more, and He knew no sin!

• He came to identify with us, suffer for us, and still never, ever sinned

• this is the chief problem of Job's friends: they have no cross

• 4.7 – "…who that was innocent ever perished?"

• the NT's answer would be loud & clear: Jesus!

Scripture's answer to this question is: Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God

- on the cross, the innocent Lamb of God suffered in the place of the guilty
- those who deserve nothing but complete & eternal judgment can receive grace
- Job's sufferings are just a shadow of the cost of grace: the Innocent One suffering

If you know this One, this Christ, then I pray you'll learn to love God for His glory

- yes, He gives us good things
- **He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?**
- but love Him for His own sake, not for what you think you can get out of God

What if you don't know this Jesus? This Innocent Sufferer?

- you must forsake yourself and any claim you think you have upon God
- you must abandon your traditional ways of thinking about how to get to heaven on your own
- instead, humble yourself and cry out for mercy

- ask that God would look upon you with mercy undeserved & grace unearned
- come to the cross of Jesus and ask forgiveness
- believe in all that He is for you and you will be saved