

Biblical Living (7) – The Past – Pain, Calamity, Grief (Part 2)

2) The innocent past when the person responded poorly.

Biblical illustration: Naomi:

Naomi was not responsible for the deaths, in rapid succession, of her husband and her two sons. Understandably, she struggled to respond rightly, believing that God had treated her bitterly.

Ruth 1:20-21

Job: Compare his responses at the beginning of his trial, in the middle, and at the end. (**Beginning:** Job 1:20-22, 2:10; **Middle:** Job 7:11, 7:20, 13:23-26, 16:12 ; **End:** Job 42:1-6)

Six truths to help the innocent sufferer who has or is responding poorly:

1. Face suffering honestly.

1 Peter 4:12. *Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you.*

Examples:

- chemical avoidance (alcohol, anti-depressants)
- relationship avoidance (pursuing relief in dating or immoral relationships)
- busyness avoidance (burying yourself in your work)
- entertainment avoidance (losing yourself in the mind-numbing world of tv, internet, or other entertainment)
- prosperity teaching (not admitting that a calamity, such as cancer, has happened)

The dangers of prosperity teaching:

Point: It takes theological preparation to handle calamity well.

2. Face suffering hopefully.

1 Cor 10:13. *No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.*

Ps 73:26. *My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*

Paul distinguishes between two kinds of sorrow in 2 Cor 7:9-10. What is the difference between them? What different results do they bring?

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Paul again shows there is a kind of sorrow that some people have, and a kind that believers should have. What is the difference? What makes the difference?

Ecclesiastes 7:1-4

Promises for those grieving: Job 5:18, Psalm 34:18, Psalm 126:5-6, Psalm 147:3, Hos 6:1-4, Matthew 5:4, Revelation 21:3-4

3. Learn about God.

Innocent sufferers especially need to be taught about God's sovereignty, wisdom, justice, goodness, and compassion.

❖ God's sovereignty and wisdom. These were the two attributes of God that eventually helped Job come to grips with his innocent suffering. God is control of the suffering, and God has a wise purpose in allowing it.

Proverbs 16:9, 16:33, 19:21, 21:1, 21:30-31

Genesis 50:20, Exodus 4:11, Proverbs 16:4, Ecclesiastes 7:14, Isaiah 45:17, Daniel 4:35, Revelation 20:10

Job 42:1-3. Then Job answered the LORD and said, "I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?'

"Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know."

God's wise purposes for sufferings

1. James 1:2-3, Romans 5:1-5, 1 Peter 5:10 - to cause endurance in us

2. 1 Peter 1:6-7, Romans 8:18-25, Hebrews 11:13-16 - to create homesickness for Heaven

3. 2 Corinthians 4:7-10, 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 - to develop deeper dependence and humility in us

4. Hebrews 12:5-11 - to train us to avoid sin and love righteousness

5. Phil 1:29, 1 Peter 2:19-25, 3:15-18, 4:12-19, Luke 6:22-23 - to be like Christ, suffering innocently in an evil world

6. 2 Corinthians 1:3-6 - to experience comfort and comfort others with what we learn

7. Philippians 1:12-14

8. 2 Tim 3:12. 2 Thes 1:4-12

❖ God's justice.

Ecclesiastes 12:14. God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil. (see also Ecc 3:16-17)

2 Thessalonians 1:6-7. For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire ...

1 Peter 2:23. ... while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously.

You should encourage innocent sufferers to imitate Christ in trusting God to deal with those who have done evil against them.

God's ultimate plan for injustice: God will remove all injustice and calamity when Christ's redemptive work is fully applied in heaven. Rev 21:4. *He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.*

Rev 22:3. *There will no longer be any curse.*

Col 3:2. *Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.*

Jesus' example of looking ahead:

Heb 12:2-3. ... *who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame Consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

Transition: Besides God's sovereignty, wisdom, and justice, innocent sufferers also need to be taught about God's goodness.

❖ God's goodness & compassion

Ps 119:68, 71. *You are good and do good It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes.*

Ultimate goodness seen in the grand plan of God: Psalm 115:3, Psalm 135:6, Isaiah 46:10, Romans 8:28, Ephesian 1:10-11, Proverbs 20:24, Jeremiah 10:23

Lamentations 3:18-24. *So I say, "My strength has perished, and so has my hope from the LORD." Remember my affliction and my wandering, the wormwood and bitterness. Surely my soul remembers and is bowed down within me. This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I have hope in Him."*

Habakkuk 3:17-19

4. Forgive the person who hurt you.

Ephesians 4:31-32. *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.*

Hebrews 12:15. *See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled.*

If you will never see the person again (thieves who broke into and ransacked the counselee's home), then he must express a genuine willingness to forgive or forgive "in his heart." However you chose to describe it, all defiling bitterness must be put off and replaced.

5. Pray for those who hurt you.

Matthew 5:44-45. *But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*

6. Help other people going through trials.

2 Cor 1:3-4. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*

Summary:

- to face suffering honestly
- to be hopeful
- to think rightly about God's sovereignty, wisdom, justice, goodness, and compassion
- to pray for those who have harmed him or her
- to help others who are suffering