

Lesson Notes for Becoming Like Jesus – Owned/Bought by Jesus

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God's faithful servant

I will ask you to hold questions till the end, please write them down if you have any.

I do not ad-lib in front of crowds well at all
So I will be reading much of my lecture.

My Bible lesson today is supposed to be on being bought by the blood of Christ.

The description of this lesson says "my body is not my own – I'm bought with a price", if we are owned by Christ, as we all know we are, then being God's faithful servant is our task of utmost importance, so I wish to talk on the book of Job as an example of someone who I think is an exemplary servant and knows they're owned by God

I'd like to start by addressing the problem of Evil before I get into the book of Job. I think it is pertinent because in my opinion this is what the book of Job does best.

Problem of Evil

The problem of evil is one of the most difficult and timeless theological questions asked, the question of why do bad things happen to good people, why do innocent people have to die.

Here we see the question of evil addressed in the Bible, and perhaps before the explanation given in the book of Job on the answer of why evil exists, this question would have been, and perhaps still is, one of the most maddening, most difficult, most insoluble, questions that there is to ask, and to some extent there is no obvious or easy solution. But regardless I think the book of Job gives us an answer. Whether we like the answer or not.

Problem of Monotheism

This problem of evil needing a solution is something that emerges exclusively in the domain of monotheism, so I think this is a topic that would be needed to be addressed if a religion is monotheistic and to be taken seriously. It's worth considering that fact, before we go further.

Polytheisms Lack of Blame

Now I'll talk about polytheism's lack of blame. In any polytheistic tradition, it's hard to know to whom to assign blame to, for the existence of evil. And also, it's not clear if there's anyone to blame at all, taking a Greek example, it could've happened because Zeus was asleep, or he was on earth chasing mortal women, or doing something else, in other words there's always the possibility that a god or gods will be distracted. Even the chief of the pantheon of any polytheistic system.

Once you have a god distracted, he is not omniscient or omnipotent. Which is necessarily the case in polytheism. The problem of evil becomes easy to solve. Somebody else was doing something evil while the main god was busy.

Buck Stops on God's Desk

On the contrary, the situation radically changes when we move to monotheism, to Christianity.

I think it was Harry Truman who once had on his desk, a sign that says the buck stops here. Well once you get to monotheism, on God's desk, the buck stops there, and we can't blame anyone else for the existence of evil in this world. It must somehow be coming from God or somehow God is implicated in the problem of evil. If God is all powerful he must in some way be at least connected to its allowance.

In other words, it's worth your consideration from the outset that the problem with evil is exclusively a problem with monotheism, within Christianity, There's no other system of religion that generates this problem in such a radical form.

Assuming that God is in charge of the universe, he made the universe, and that God is perfectly virtuous and perfectly Good. God has perfect moral status, and because God has none of the temptations that human beings are subject to.

The problem is how could a perfect God create an imperfect world that contains evil within it. How is it that God can allow for evil.

Why would God Create a World less than Perfect

Now there's no obvious or easy answer to that. One of the reasons why people continually raise this question, why it seems that we are always under the burden of this question, and when we search scripture, many are met with less than satisfactory results, of why we have to face evil in this world. Why would a perfect God generate a world less than perfect? How is it that a perfect God generated us, when we are so obviously and visibly imperfect?

We want a Formula

The problem that we face is,

The distance, the gap, between us and the divine, is inscrutable, so uncertain, and yet we search around for different ways to formulate the problem of evil, and from that we would formulate answers. To possibly come to some final solution, for understanding why evil exists.

Job is an old book

Now I offer you a solution, the book of Job.

Now the book of Job is one that most explicitly addresses the problem of evil and it does it in a very radical form, it does it in a storytelling form.

The Setting of God and Satan?

Now the first chapter and a half gives us a narrative frame scene, which in and of itself is almost completely enigmatic, we are set in a place that isn't determined, not knowing exactly where the location is, all we know about the place is that God is there, and God is surrounded by the angels, his angels have come to him, and among the angels has also come Satan.

Implicit Questions

Now this raises questions, 1 how did Satan seemingly get up to what sounds like heaven? 2 what's the point in coming to have an argument with God, because you always lose an argument with God and 3 Satan being Satan, why doesn't God just squash Satan like a bug, in other words why does God let Satan do stuff like this?

God's providence

God being God he must have something in mind, since his providence runs the whole world. This must be something that is part of God's general plan for the world.

These are some of the implicated questions the very beginning of the story raises.

The Lord talks about Job

Now at the beginning of this colloquy God asks where have you come from? and Satan says "oh to and fro, walking here and there" and God asks "Have you considered my servant Job, there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil"

Now we see, this is someone who knows he belongs to the Lord. Job never blasphemes, he's rigorous in his adherence to the Law, he shows appropriate respect to the Lord. Job is God's faithful servant.

Job is a special instantiation

If I had to choose one instantiation of the image of biblical faith tested beyond what we would think to be the limits of human endurance, I would say Job is the example.

I want to say Job adopts the Biblical mindset, the philosophy of absolute resignation to the Lord, however we see he only accepts this gradually and somewhat unwillingly.

And as is the case of other chastisements sent by God there's always a reason for it, at the end of this chastisement we would have moved up to a new moral level, to a new understanding of the human relationship between the human and the divine.

Back to God and Satan Talking

We return to God and Satan talking, looking down, they see that Job shows the appropriate respects to God, he is virtuous, he is obedient, he is Gods faithful servant. And Satan says, "Job doesn't really like you, he only goes through the motions for the benefits you give him, in the words of Emanuel Kant, Jobs actions are heteronomous, that is, the opposite of autonomous, autonomy being where one acts of their own accord, no incentives needed.

but Satan proposes instead that Job only acts for rewards, because he is receiving wonderful prosperity in his flocks, his family, his health and wealth, "if you didn't give him all this great stuff Job wouldn't like you, he wouldn't follow you."

God allows Satan to "provoke" him**

Now a few things in the story so far seem enigmatic, this story from a first time reader's view makes it seem like God here, has allowed himself to have been provoked by Satan, and it's hard to see why God would take the bait or, even why Satan is up there in the first place.

But clearly as we know God has a plan and his plan is perfect because he is infallible,

continuing, God replies saying "if you don't believe Job is my faithful servant go down and test Job"

Stripping down of Job

Now we will get to see the inner core of Job, we move from the outside behavior of Job and his ritual observance of God, to see the inner core, this is done by stripping away externalities, stripping away his family, his possessions, all the other good things in life.

Satan being a Tool for insight

May I propose that, in some ways it seems that Satan is doing God's will, not that Satan is successfully provoking God but rather that God is going to play 4d chess and use Satan to reveal the difference between the inner and the outer of Job, I would also think even if Satan does know it's futile to argue with God, I'm sure it doesn't matter to Satan because Satan seems to be content to have any excuse to make someone miserable. But through Satan we see the separation in Job of the attitude of religious faith as a matter of soul, and the mere going through the motions of religion observance on the outside, so Satan here is what's going to allow US to look into the soul of Job, into the soul of Gods faithful servant.

Satan is allowed to Test Job

Now Satan goes down and kills jobs flocks, kills his children, his servants all within a moment's notice, almost everything precious taken from him, everything except God. Job does not blaspheme, he is not willing to hang the blame on God, he IS willing to acknowledge that God runs the world, and sends chastisements for whatever reason he has, but Job doesn't comprehend the reason for chastisement or the afflictions he's been sent.

Despite all this enormous misfortune Job says I will not blaspheme, I will not curse God under any circumstances.

Double or nothing

Job not blaspheming, Satan comes back and says double or nothing, fool me once shame on you fool me twice shame on me, Satan's pride can't be stopped and he wants to prove God wrong and make God's faithful servant Job, blaspheme and curse God.

Satan says to God, "he never was your servant and only appears to be, the only reason he still appears to be is because you haven't stricken him with physical pain, physical suffering upon his body, he's more than willing to be unsympathetic to his family and possessions, as long as he can rebuild, as long as you don't hit him in the body where it counts"

Satan afflicts job again and his wife tells him to curse God

Once again God allows Satan to curse Job, and at this point, he's covered in sores and boils and he's wretched and unhappy, sitting in the ash, and his wife comes over and is looking at him, his only surviving family member his very own wife, comes to him and tells him to curse God and die, some wife huh.

But Job bears under the suffering he says "despite losing everything I'm not going curse God, that is not my place, whatever happens I will remain Gods faithful servant"

Three wise men appear

Well, Satan has seemingly served his purpose in this story, lost his futile bets against God and moves out of the story and now we enter to 28 chapters of Job and his three friends talking. They have come to commiserate with him, these wannabe wise men, wannabe theologians, men who think they have figured out God and have a formula for what they think is why things happen in the universe, practitioners of theodicy.

Theodicy being

"The vindication of God. It is to answer the question of why a good God permits the manifestation of evil, thus resolving the issue of the problem of evil."

Now these guys think they know why good and bad happens.

The Hubris of Job's Friends

I want to touch on The Hubris of Job's Friends, and how they are trying to vindicate God, to explain God and be the men who FINALLY SOLVE EVERYTHING. Job's friends don't come to commiserate with him truly, it seems, but to justify themselves and practice their theodicy.

Job's friends are men who have this pride that even when it comes to their friend who is in the "ER", they still can't put the pride aside, their thoughts of how can they finally answer all the questions of God or how they can justify that they are right and Job is wrong.

Modern Day

Allow me to put it in these terms, we can all understand, your friends visit you after a bad car crash where your whole family has died, you're in terrible condition and your house has burnt down and somebody has stolen your identity and taken all your savings, and your friends come along and try to tell you why God made you wreck and that you're a sinner.

Job's friends try to condemn him

Now Job's friends start by giving him one explanation, "perhaps you've sinned perhaps you are an evil man" and Job says "no, hold it, you've known me, you know I've been a righteous man, I don't do evil to my fellow man, I don't blaspheme, I have insofar as it's been possible kept God's laws, you may think I've committed some secret sin, but I know In my heart of hearts I have not.

The fact you want to say I've committed some sin, is because you want to fix God into some form you've created, because the incomprehensibility of God is just too much for you to handle. And the fact of the matter is that I'm an innocent man"

Claim: your family has sinned

One of his friends says "perhaps your family has committed some sort of sin perhaps this idea of guilt is collective rather than individual"

Job says "I don't know about the sins of someone else but I know I have not done any such thing and that's not the reason this is why this is happening"

Perhaps this is much like the idea of Adam and Eve condemning everyone by eating from the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Claim: you unknowingly sinned

One of his friends says "perhaps it's an unintentional sin and you didn't know about it" Job replies "no I have done what I have ought to have done it's not like that"

Job says God is arbitrary

There's a whole series of back and forth and Job continues to maintain his innocence, and his friends say "well look there's got to be some rational explanation as to why God would send such evil to you, God doesn't send it arbitrarily"

Job replies "yes he does, often it turns out people who do evil, prosper, all the while the innocent receive terrible afflictions"

One can easily lose faith

Now this is a problem, it could easily make someone lose their faith in God. It is a real moral test, perhaps the greatest moral test that there is, if our God is an all-powerful and loving God, why would he punish us or people who are good and yet reward people who are evil, why is it that Stalin managed to kill millions of people and yet died in his bed, why do children get run over?

Job's friends think they have the answers to this.

Job's friends, wannabe practitioners of theology, concoct pseudo-rational explanations for the way of God.

Now Job tells his friends that this is one of the worst places you could put yourself in, is a place of judging God, and he says I'm blameless and I'm very skeptical of my friends pseudo-explanations and I do think God is arbitrary in the way he gives out suffering and relief.

Job missing the Mark

Now we see Job is clearly on the right track with surrendering his will to God, but, Job continues to lay claim to his own blamelessness, which makes God seem evil, for want for a better word. This causes a problem because if you believe in the God of the Bible, you must hold that whatever He does it's always good.

Now Job maintains himself as Gods servant, but doesn't really think he's done anything to deserve this and thus is questioning God's will.

Job silenced his friends

Through the course of 50-60 back and forth's between Job and his friends he manages to silence them. Seemingly the more his friends go on, the more they realize their accounts of how they consider the world to work don't quite make sense of everything, and that they can't rebuttal Job, as he maintains his blamelessness regardless of everything.

Anti theological

With these wise men silenced we might say Job is the most anti-theological book, at least that I know of. Now that's not the same as atheistic, in other words it's one thing to believe in God but another thing to say that you understand what He's doing with the world.

One involves simple and fundamental religious faith.

The second involves a hubris a pride thinking that oneself can comprehend or understand the inner workings of The Divine, thinking one can understand why God's providence is the way it is.

This book, in my opinion, shows that studies to derive the will of God or some higher understanding of knowledge can be fruitless and even in vain, this is, if it is not just to learn and seek out how to better serve the Lord. That our approach should be a submission to His will, and a compliance with His Law, and to all of what God brings us.

Elihu comes along

Back to Job, what turns out to be the case is that Job manages to silence his friends, perhaps not convince them but to shake up their answers.

Now at the end of this back and forth, a young man comes along, Elihu, and he rebukes Job, and he says "I've kept my mouth shut since I'm a young man and I find it appropriate to learn from the old, the wise, from people who have managed to absorb wisdom over the years, so through this argument I kept my mouth shut, in the hopes of learning things about God's nature. But having seen you silence these theological

wannabees, having seen you maintain your faith while also coming perilously close to assigning evil to God or at least arbitrary capriciousness to God, I can't stand by and listen to that.

Grills Job on righteousness

What he says is this, "you are not righteous in the sight of God, no matter how righteous you think you are, you are not, compared to the complete awesome inscrutable majesty of God, you are not justified. The only way to justify yourself is to blame God, that doesn't make any sense, by definition that is contradictory and incoherent and most important it is blasphemy. Who are you to judge God, by definition God is always right, if God wants to send you suffering, He's God, if he wants to send you Joy, He's God. In either case it's the thing to send you because He is God. The idea that you should justify yourself at God's expense is the height of impertinence, is a complete retreat of your would be fidelity, and in addition to that, you yourself don't believe it Job, if you did, you would have cursed God already"

Complete submission to God

"Well Job you're going to die, in fact we are all going to die, and the fact of the matter is if you do anything other than submit to the will of God, and accept all he sends you, good and evil, then ultimately you are not a faithful man and you are not God's faithful servant. Elihu, seemingly being God's mouthpiece, straightens Job out about the whole thing, says look God is God and who are we to judge him "

Elihu says

"Do you think this to be just? Do you say, 'It is my right before God?'"

Job 35:2 ESV

"Look at the heavens, and see; and behold the clouds, which are higher than you. If you have sinned, what do you accomplish against him? And if your transgressions are multiplied, what do you do to him? If you are righteous, what do you give to him? Or what does he receive from your hand?"

Job 35:5-7 ESV

Bildad

"How then can man be in the right before God? How can he who is born of woman be pure? Behold, even the moon is not bright, and the stars are not pure in his eyes; how much less man, who is a maggot, and the son of man, who is a worm!"

Job 25:4-6 ESV

Being that of a Worm

I would tend to agree with Bildad here, that when I look at the cosmic hierarchy of things, asking myself who has been created by God, and who is the Creator, who can make life, who has the power over death, who is subject to death, who crawls upon the ground, who eats of the earth, if I take an ontological look at this I have more in common with a worm than with God. Look at it this way, if we have a worm over here

and God over here, where do I sit, I certainly think I'm closer to a worm than to God. And for a worm to judge God or to even talk to you and tell you how to run things is preposterous because the worm is so much below you. And the analogy is made in chapter 25 telling us that nothing is right or just in the eyes of God, and the idea of any of his creatures willing to justify themselves at the expense of Him is wrong. Well that means we should not seek out after self-justification we should patiently submit to the will of God.

In some respects the worm is more virtuous than we are, at least the worm doesn't try to tell God how to run the universe, the worm doesn't try to be something that it's not, yet we would presume to judge the Almighty, the Inscrutable Deity, how foolish, how presumptuous, how sinful.

Job's Secret Sin

Perhaps Job has had a secret sin all along, perhaps there's been a latent pride. He thought himself justified and he thought he deserved good things from God. I think the message here is that when we get gifts from God, we get them as an act of free grace and we don't deserve them, heck we don't even deserve to be alive, we don't deserve to exist, nothing deserves to exist, the fact that anything exists at all is testament to His righteousness His mercy, His power. The fact that we believe we deserve a series of good things is both foolish and ridiculous, we should not be a presumptuous worm, that's part of the book of Job, that we know our status in the hierarchy of things, and we don't try to outreach ourselves.

Elihu's reason is true

Well Job is clearly in a predicament, Elihu has clearly quieted him down, and it's clear Elihu isn't doing this for the same reason Job's friends are. Job's friends want to put God into a logical box, his friends want to put God, the inscrutable, infallible God, under the constraints of the feeble, finite, limited mental abilities of the human mind. What Elihu says, is, that's just not possible, we cannot force the ocean into a teaspoon.

We are Lucky to have Life

We are lucky to get the small rays of understanding we do actually get, as God is under no precedence to explain Himself to us. How can we blame God for not explaining the universe to us, we are lucky to exist at all. If we are content with knowing that, and still able to affirm the word, still able to say yes to God's providence and say yes to the good and bad we get sent, that is the authentic stance toward being, to being owned by God, being bought by the blood of Christ, the complete acceptance and submission to the will of God. Not only do we see here that we are lucky to simply be alive in God's kingdom but for him to have sent His Son to die on the cross, truly God has infinite mercy.

God comes as a Whirlwind

After his colloquy with Elihu, along comes God. God speaks to Job out of a whirlwind, what a profound image, a mighty tornado is before you, something that is a force of great destruction, something that has no equal, something that we are helpless before,

a representation of unyielding chaos, this is how Job describes God's attitude and that God gives to the evil and takes from the good, that there is no rhyme or reason. How he thinks God dictates the universe. So I find it very apropos that this is how God appears.

But here we see God is in control and asks Job all these leading questions, to show truly God is in absolute control. It's quite oxymoronic to the laws of nature, like many things in the Bible showing things such as David beating Goliath, a burning bush that doesn't burn, to bring forth a tornado and have control over the uncontrollable and chaotic.

The Lord Questions Job

Now God asks Job, do you know how to make mountains Job? I know how to make mountains. Do you know how to make mackerel Job? I know how to. Do you know how to make ducks? I know how to make ducks.

The Lord asks Job a litany of questions on the secrets of this world that Job does not know and cannot know. He finishes, stops in the middle saying "Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer it."

Job 40:2 ESV

So those who wish to find fault with God or some capricious attitude within God's actions, then first answer his questions of "Where is the way to the dwelling of light, and where is the place of darkness?"

Job 38:19

Job's friends are rebuked

"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 42:7 ESV

Job's friends get off pretty light with just a few sacrifices and a prayer from Job.

Job's wealth is doubled

At the end of this story, God takes care of Job, he doubles Job's wealth, gives him beautiful daughters and many sons, with a long-lived life to see 4 generations of his family and die at a ripe old age.

Conclusion

In conclusion the problem with evil is

It's a dumb question with a dumb answer for a dumb people, can we move the stars, the sun, the moon, can we create life or command the thunder and lightning, do we know the secrets of this world, the answer is no, clearly we do not have the comprehension to understand God's vast complexity, we ask a dumb question that we clearly cannot understand so we receive an answer appropriate answer to our dumb question. That answer is, "it's not for you to understand, I'm God and you're not."

I'd like to say that our answer to the Lord in everything he does for us, should be absolute submission.

Did our Savior Jesus Christ not submit to the excruciating pains of the cross for us?

Has God not sacrificed His only begotten son?

Has he not already given us more than we could ever dream to imagine to do for him?

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Matthew 5:10