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Sermon Notes

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Job's Complaint Against Man and God

Job 6-7

Suffering for a short time is hard enough... chronic suffering – long-term, grinding suffering, is beyond the natural endurance of any human... eventually our resolve begins to waver and crumble as the trial bears down on us

At the first moment of the crisis, we can respond with great energy, great determination, great valor. Ordinary men have been able to lift cars that are pinning and crushing their wives; soldiers grievously wounded on the battlefield can function amazingly, almost as if they had no wound at all... but later, they can barely endure the pain of the surgery and wilt at the months of painful rehab. The same is true of shocking emotional loss... the news of the death of a child comes with it seems a numbing agent... the hours and days that immediately follow the tragedy pass by like a blur... friends come and the grieving parents say all the right things, but they feel none of them. They go to bed with their heads spinning, as it seems they are getting through the funeral day and the immediate bereavement with admirable faith and trust in the Lord.

But then the days become months, and the couple still has to walk by their child's room, see framed photos on the wall, have a bookmark made by their precious little one tumble out of the Bible onto the floor... and the sight of it feels like a javelin thrown into the heart. Fresh waves of pain come, and this time, the reactions are not so pious, not so polished.

So it was with Job. As we move deeper into this book, we begin this morning with Job's first response to his friend's words – to Eliphaz's first speech. As you remember, Eliphaz came at him somewhat gently, but still wrongly. The basic thesis was plain:

Job 4:8 those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap it.

Trouble comes because of sin... God is sovereign and actively rules the earth, and nothing happens for no reason. YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW! Therefore, the shortest route back to prosperity is to acknowledge your sins to God and make your appeal directly to him:

Job 5:8 But if it were I, I would appeal to God; I would lay my cause before him.

This was Eliphaz's counsel... it is based on his sound and long-standing observation of life in this world:

BUT Eliphaz's doctrine of sowing and reaping, however true in general is FALSE in its application to Job! The fact is that the law of sowing and reaping only explains SOME of the outcomes we observe in human life. Actually, as is clearly the case with Job, some great evils can come upon those who have no great sin in their lives... and (as we will discuss in future sermons) great prosperity can come on those who are actually greatly wicked.

NOW... it is time for Job to respond.

These initial statements will display Job's heart at its worst... the anger and sense of injustice starts to come to the surface. And he begins to pour out complaints against both his friends and his Lord. These complaints will intensify as we go on beyond this week. But it starts today.

I break these two chapters of Job's words into two main parts, each with three portions. In chapter 6, Job basically complains against his friends. In chapter 7, Job complains against his God.

Summary: what Job wants from his friends is loyal kindness and compassion. What Job wants from his God is either forgiveness or for God to kill him or leave him entirely alone.

I. Job Complains Against His Friends (Job 6:1-30)

A. The magnitude of my suffering (6:1-7)

Job 6:1-7 Then Job replied: ² "If only my anguish could be weighed and all my misery be placed on the scales! ³ It would surely outweigh the sand of the seas-- no wonder my words have been impetuous. ⁴ The arrows of the Almighty are in me, my spirit drinks in their poison; God's terrors are marshaled against me. ⁵ Does a wild donkey bray when it has grass, or an ox bellow when it has fodder? ⁶ Is tasteless food eaten without salt, or is there flavor in the white of an egg? ⁷ I refuse to touch it; such food makes me ill.

1. His anguish (vexation) is HEAVY... it presses on him like a massive boulder pressing on his chest
2. He uses overwhelming exaggeration to describe his anguish... it would outweigh all the grains of sand of every seashore on earth
3. It is not surprising, therefore, that his words are so rash, so impetuous; it is not surprising that he is saying things that should not be said... it's like the overwhelming weight of sorrow is forcing these rash words to the surface; he's saying things that ordinarily he would have pushed down and squelched and no one would ever have known what he was thinking
4. Trials come and seem to draw things from deep within our souls that we didn't even know were there—sinful thoughts and attitudes
5. But suffering people can easily give themselves permission to say whatever they want
6. He wants his friends to know that it is very hard for people not being crushed by sorrow to understand those that are

7. He says that the ARROWS OF THE ALMIGHTY ONE have penetrated him... he is lying wounded on the battlefield of life with arrows sticking out of his heart; and those arrows were shot by GOD... **“It is GOD’S terrors which are arrayed against me, like a mighty besieging army; as I look out over the parapet of my soul, I see the vast power of God arrayed against me!”**
8. Job speaks of beasts... the wild donkey, that runs free, and the massive ox that stands still... when they have what they need, they are peaceful; when their stomachs are full, they keep quiet
9. But Job’s illness makes even the blandest food REPULSIVE
10. This is the magnitude of my sorrow, O my friends

B. I wish I could die before I sin (6:8-13)

Job 6:8-13 "Oh, that I might have my request, that God would grant what I hope for, ⁹ that God would be willing to crush me, to let loose his hand and cut me off! ¹⁰ Then I would still have this consolation-- my joy in unrelenting pain-- that I had not denied the words of the Holy One. ¹¹ "What strength do I have, that I should still hope? What prospects, that I should be patient? ¹² Do I have the strength of stone? Is my flesh bronze? ¹³ Do I have any power to help myself, now that success has been driven from me?"

1. My deepest desire right now is just to get out of this world before I blaspheme God
2. God has struck me to the ground with his arrows and his savage blows... why doesn't he just finish me off?
3. All I have left in this world to cling to is that I have not blasphemed the Holy One, Almighty God
4. My wife said to me: **"Curse God and die!"**
5. But even then, I refused to charge God with any wrongdoing... I actually worshiped God and praised him. And when he struck me a second time with this foul disease, even then I did not accuse God of wrongdoing.

6. But as this trial wears me down, as day passes into day, as month rolls into month, I feel a growing rage, a growing resentment within me... I do not even want to put it into words... for then I would sin
 7. So my only desire right now is that God would just finish me off!
 8. I can't go on like this for much longer... I am only a frail man, flesh and blood... I'm not made of stone or bronze... I will begin to crumble before your eyes
 9. And the dark thoughts I feel growing inside my heart will soon bubble to the surface. So it would be better for me to DIE than to sin
 10. The trial is wearing this man down... he is losing strength of soul
 11. Now... he turns his bitter guns on his treacherous friends!
- C. You, my friends, are treacherous when you should be loyal and sympathetic (6:14-30)

Job 6:14-17 "A despairing man should have the devotion of his friends, even though he forsakes the fear of the Almighty. ¹⁵ But my brothers are as undependable as intermittent streams, as the streams that overflow ¹⁶ when darkened by thawing ice and swollen with melting snow, ¹⁷ but that cease to flow in the dry season, and in the heat vanish from their channels.

1. Job uses the terms of friendship... he speaks of them as friends; he calls them BROTHERS
2. That's what makes them so painful... when they should be loyal and sympathetic, they are treacherous instead
3. The image is one of streams in the desert; in the springtime, when the mountain ice melts and begins to run, the streams are bursting with cool clear water; but when the summertime comes and the day is hot, when a wanderer in the desert sees the streambed, he runs to it hoping to get a drink... but it is DRY as dust... no refreshment when you need it the most
4. Caravans running from cities like Tema and Sheba in Arabia rely on these streams in the desert; if they came upon them in their time

of need, they would perish in the sands of the desert without the life-giving water

5. So it is with these treacherous friends; when Job needed their loving compassion and words of encouragement, they charge him with sin; Job feels like he was crawling on his knees toward them for a tender word to help him... and instead, he gets a mouthful of sand
6. They have fallen far short of LOYAL KINDNESS... the Hebrew word *hesed* is a powerful one; this is where the rubber meets the road when it comes to friendship. But they have given him NOTHING
7. If friendship does not prove itself at such a time as this, what is it for?
8. He makes an open appeal for their sympathy:

Job 6:24-30 "Teach me, and I will be quiet; show me where I have been wrong. ²⁵ How painful are honest words! But what do your arguments prove? ²⁶ Do you mean to correct what I say, and treat the words of a despairing man as wind? ²⁷ You would even cast lots for the fatherless and barter away your friend. ²⁸ "But now be so kind as to look at me. Would I lie to your face? ²⁹ Relent, do not be unjust; reconsider, for my integrity is at stake. ³⁰ Is there any wickedness on my lips? Can my mouth not discern malice?"

9. He asks for their counsel... if you think I have sinned, SHOW ME HOW!
10. Your "honest" words are cutting me like a knife... but you cannot PROVE your accusations... no evidence at all for his sins!!
11. Job begins to get aggressive with them... he is angry at them; he says that they would cast lots over the blameless and barter away a friend... like Joseph's brothers selling him into bondage or Judas betraying Jesus for thirty pieces of silver
12. He concludes by saying LOOK AT ME! LOOK AT MY FACE! Can you say these things to my face?? He begs them to RELENT their accusations out of compassion for him

13. He makes the plain assertion that he is innocent and is not lying about his true condition

II. Job Complains Against His God (Job 7:1-21)

A. My days are both too long and too short (7:1-6)

Job 7:1-6 "Does not man have hard service on earth? Are not his days like those of a hired man? ² Like a slave longing for the evening shadows, or a hired man waiting eagerly for his wages, ³ so I have been allotted months of futility, and nights of misery have been assigned to me. ⁴ When I lie down I think, 'How long before I get up?' The night drags on, and I toss till dawn. ⁵ My body is clothed with worms and scabs, my skin is broken and festering. ⁶ 'My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and they come to an end without hope.

1. As Job turns his attention to God, it is clear he is dealing now with his true situation
2. At this point, he is not wishing he'd never been born... he WAS born and this has happened... so he is not in denial about it
3. He laments the plight of all human beings... man has to endure hard service on the earth... like a slave who works all day yearning simply for the day to be over and night to come
4. Or like a hired hand who works hard for a couple of coins in his hand at the end of the day by which he can buy enough food to feed his family that evening
5. That's what life feels like to Job now... he is a poor man with no possessions, and time has changed for him
6. When he lies down, all he can think about is when the night will end because sleep eludes him... he is in PAIN... and INSOMNIA drives away any rest... he tosses and turns and tosses and turns until dawn ends the torturous night
7. But the day is no better! Because all day long, his skin is festering and crawling with worms

8. So ironically, his life seems to be fleeting... flying away swifter than a weaver's shuttle
 - a. Life is a MIST, a VAPOR that appears for a LITTLE WHILE then vanishes
9. Time is playing tricks on him... someone once said "The days are long and the years are short."
10. Soon, the tapestry of my life is over and I am cut off from the loom... folded up and put in the corner while the weaver begins another piece of cloth... MY TIME IS OVER!
11. That's what my time is like... I can make no sense of it at all!

B. Remember, O God... I won't be here for much longer (7:7-10)

Job 7:7-10 Remember... that my life is but a breath; my eyes will never see happiness again. ⁸ The eye that now sees me will see me no longer; you will look for me, but I will be no more. ⁹ As a cloud vanishes and is gone, so he who goes down to the grave does not return. ¹⁰ He will never come to his house again; his place will know him no more.

1. So Job turns his attention now to God
2. It is very clear that these words are addressed to God and not to his friends
3. He is calling on God to REMEMBER how frail and fragile he is

Psalm 103:14 for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.

4. Effectively he is saying to God, "How much more of this do you think I can handle?"
5. It is evident to me that I will never have any pleasure ever again... all the things I ever enjoyed were ripped away from me in one day
6. So, if there is nothing left on earth for me but pain, realize that I am effectively as good as gone already

7. [Amazingly, Job would again experience great pleasure by the end of this book and in the latter stage of his life... but the suffering cannot imagine another happy day ever happening for them again]
 8. Job says to God, REMEMBER that I will soon be gone; you will look for me and you will not find me... and the place where I lived will remember me no more
 9. My life is a mist, a vapor that appears for a little while... a cloud that the wind blows away without leaving a trace
 10. Once I die, I will be gone forever, and you will never see me again
- C. You, my God, are terrifying me when you should forgive (7:11-21)
1. Now Job turns directly on God and brings his complaint right to him
 2. He will use bitter sarcasm, and is beginning to question the attributes of God... his goodness, his mercy, his justice
 3. The seeds of his later accusations are all here in this section

Job 7:11-16 "Therefore I will not keep silent; I will speak out in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. ¹² Am I the sea, or the monster of the deep, that you put me under guard? ¹³ When I think my bed will comfort me and my couch will ease my complaint, ¹⁴ even then you frighten me with dreams and terrify me with visions, ¹⁵ so that I prefer strangling and death, rather than this body of mine. ¹⁶ I despise my life; I would not live forever. Let me alone; my days have no meaning.

4. Job cannot keep silent... he must voice his deep distress
5. He starts by wondering why God feels it necessary to deal so powerfully and vigorously with a mere mortal like him
6. He asks if he is a MONSTER OF THE DEEP, a sea serpent, like a cosmic enemy of God that needs to be captured and put in chains with a guard set over him... "O God, am I somehow a THREAT to your mighty throne??"

7. How could that be? In the midst of my disease, I go lie down on a bed... and even when I do that, all that happens is more agony—O God, you are relentlessly guarding me like I am some dangerous monster; even on my bed, I find no rest but only the torments of terror
8. When I dream, all it is is nightmares, night terrors, leaving me in a cold sweat, wondering what new terrors will come with the next day?
9. It's as those these nightmares are the evening's guard detail, set over me to make sure I don't have a moment's peace
10. Other times, I try to breathe and I am strangled by my agonies... I am panting, trying to catch my breath; but I wish I would NOT catch my breath!
11. I HATE MY LIFE... there is nothing good for me in life
12. I WISH YOU WOULD JUST LEAVE ME ALONE!!

Job 7:17-21 "What is man that you make so much of him, that you give him so much attention, ¹⁸ that you examine him every morning and test him every moment? ¹⁹ Will you never look away from me, or let me alone even for an instant? ²⁰ If I have sinned, what have I done to you, O watcher of men? Why have you made me your target? Have I become a burden to you? ²¹ Why do you not pardon my offenses and forgive my sins? For I will soon lie down in the dust; you will search for me, but I will be no more."

13. Job finishes his lament by wondering what God gets out of staring so intently at human beings?
14. Why do you CARE so much about us? You are exalted high over all the heavens, and the nations before you are like grasshoppers and like dust on the scales and a drop of water from a bucket... that's WHOLE NATIONS! Why do you zero in on me... me... a little peon, a flickering flame with nothing left to offer
15. Why do you stare at us, examine us, test us, orchestrate trials and circumstances for us?

16. I feel naked before your gaze, O God... your staring at me makes me terrified. Please turn away from me... even for an instant, long enough for my to swallow some spit
17. At this point, Job seems to be increasingly disrespectful to God... **“If I have sinned, what I have I done to you, O WATCHER OF MEN?”** It’s like he’s charging the ineffable, infinitely glorious, highly exalted God with being WEIRD to care so much about a tiny black ant running on the ground seeking a whole to run into
18. The bottom line is simple: If you are so mighty and powerful, and I am so little and insignificant, then why should my sins—whatever they are—trouble you so much, O God?
19. WHY DON’T YOU JUST FORGIVE ME!! Soon, I am going to die anyway... why not just give me a moment’s peace in your merciful forgiveness before I sink back into the dust from which I came?

III. Timeless Lessons for Us

A. The Last Lesson is First: We DO Matter to God!

1. The fact that God is a watcher of men is clearly taught in the Bible

Psalm 8:3-4 When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, ⁴ what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?

2. The fact that He is actually SO EXALTED in his majesty that he CAN be a watcher of individual people is taught
3. It is actually shrinking God to say “God is so busy spinning the planets and running the entire earth that he cannot be bothered with a little person like me”
4. God is infinitely majestic enough to DO BOTH!
5. He is a watcher of men... every single person on the face of the earth

Psalm 139:1-6 O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. ² You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from

afar. ³ You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. ⁴ Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD. ⁵ You hem me in-- behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. ⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

B. Our Sins Are Eternally Consequential

1. It is not a small thing that we, individual human beings, created in the image of God, created to love God and serve him... it is not a small thing when we sin
2. It really does matter to God! It is not a light thing to just forgive our sins

C. Our Sins Are Atoned for by God's Faithful Love in Christ

1. Job accused his friends of failing in *hesed*... loyal covenant love
2. But it is precisely this electing, redeeming love that caused God to move out in compassion and save us from our sins and misery
3. This he did by sending Christ! He did it to demonstrate his faithful love to us

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 15:13-14 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command.

The real question I must ask you, my dear friend... have you found forgiveness through faith in Christ... before your days are cut off from the loom—Job was right, our days ARE swifter than a shuttle and more transient than a wispy cloud!

D. Jesus is therefore the perfect friend

1. Job's friends betrayed him by their groundless accusations of his vast secret sins
2. They failed to be loyal

3. But Jesus' loyalty to us will never fail
4. He shed his blood for us to take away all our sins
5. By his Spirit he walks with us through all our trials

Hebrews 13:5 God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

Isaiah 43:1-2 "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. ² When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

E. God Knows How Much We Can Take

1. Job was saying, "Be careful, God... you are pushing me incredibly hard. I can't take this much longer! I am almost at my breaking point!"
2. But the basic implication is that God is making a mistake... he is an engineer that has miscalculated the load limit for the bridge and is now having an armored division with two hundred tanks drive across the bridge... don't you hear the creaking and cracking, God... I CAN'T TAKE THIS ANY LONGER!
3. But God knows how far to push us

1 Corinthians 10:13 God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear.

F. Sound Theology Must Be Supplemented with Humility and Love

1. The friends' basic error here was trusting their true theology too much
2. The "Law of Sowing and Reaping" is in fact true... but it does not cover every angle and dimension of the problem of evil
3. We at FBC can and should cherish right doctrines... but sound theology carries a network of balancing, interconnected truths

4. When we are applying truth to actual human lives, we need to be humble that there's more to learn, and be loving

Ephesians 4:15 speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

G. Friends Should Do Better Than These Men

1. Believe the best about your suffering friends
2. Speak humbly, lovingly, and tenderly
3. Perhaps they ARE being disciplined for their sins... but there are better ways to counsel even in that case
4. But if they say "I know I am a sinner, but there is no great sin pattern in my life", believe them unless there is evidence!

H. Sufferers Should Not Give Themselves Permission to Blaspheme God

Job 6:2-3 "If only my anguish could be weighed and all my misery be placed on the scales! ³ It would surely outweigh the sand of the seas-- no wonder my words have been impetuous.

It will never help us to be angry at God or accuse him of sin!

Just because you're suffering, don't forget the perfections of God