

The Silver Lining of Fear

Dark Clouds, Silver Linings-part 5

November 2, 2014

DAY 1: The roots of fear

1. Let's review. The first three weeks we looked at the silver linings of loneliness, emptiness and discouragement. This is the "Ecclesiastes Experience." God uses these experiences to uncover:

a. The realization that nothing this world has to offer can effectively meet the deepest desires of the heart. Even when these desires are touched, the experience doesn't last long enough or touch something deep enough.

b. We have a hidden and deeper thirst for what only God can meet. We were made for a particular kind of relationship we cannot find anywhere else.

2. Last week, we shifted to the "Job Experience." Our redeemer God uses suffering in our lives to expose our central commitment to ourselves as highest priority, and our stubborn commitment to making life work without Him.

a. **Depression** is fueled by a priority belief that **no matter what I do**, I cannot get the "**life**" I believe I **need** and **deserve** in order to be happy.

b. **Fear** occurs when it appears to me that **I may not get** what I believe I need and deserve in order to be happy. Fear arises with any person or any event that my heart deems critical to meeting my need, **may not** come through as I'd like.

3. Job lost seven sons and three daughters, and all his sheep, camels, oxen and donkeys. His body was covered with boils.

Job 3:25 "What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me.

²⁶ I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil."

4. What is the difference between "fear" and "dread"?

5. In Job 3:26, Job tells us the effects on him of his losses. Next to each one, elaborate on what you think he is saying:

a. No peace-

b. No quietness-

c. No rest-

d. Only turmoil-

6. What strikes you about "fear?"

DAY 2: Fear: the loss of perceived control.

1. We experience fear when we're not sure how our efforts at getting our deepest needs met will play out. It may work and it may not.
2. We also experience fear when it appears to us that are not in "control" of the people or events on whom we are really counting on to meet our needs.
3. Most of us Christians follow God, at least in part for the blessings He provides, or the protection against the loss of blessing He provides. We like to maintain the illusion that we are the real gatekeepers of blessing. As long as we're "in control" doing "our part," God must do "His part."

*Job 21:6 When I think about this, I am **terrified**; **trembling** seizes my body.*

⁷ Why do the wicked live on, growing old and increasing in power?

⁸ They see their children established around them, their offspring before their eyes.

*⁹ Their homes are safe and **free from fear**; the rod of God is not upon them.*

¹⁰ Their bulls never fail to breed; their cows calve and do not miscarry.

¹¹ They send forth their children as a flock; their little ones dance about.

¹² They sing to the music of tambourine and harp; they make merry to the sound of the flute.

¹³ They spend their years in prosperity and go down to the grave in peace.

¹⁴ Yet they say to God, 'Leave us alone! We have no desire to know your ways.'

¹⁵ Who is the Almighty, that we should serve him? What would we gain by praying to him?'

¹⁶ But their prosperity is not in their own hands, so I stand aloof from the counsel of the wicked.

4. In Job 21, Job admits his terror. It produces trembling. How would you summarize what Job is saying in Job 21:6-16?

5. Fear is a "funny" taskmaster. On one hand when we lose any sense of being in control of things or people central to our needs being met, we experience great fear. On the other hand, when we falsely think "we are in control" of the things central to our needs being met, we also experience fear! Do we really have what it takes to get the people and events in our lives to come through for us? This includes God!

6. From Job 21:6-15, Job is terrified because he realizes he is not in control of his life as he once imagined. But in 21:16, Job realizes that those who oppose God are not on "Easy Street."

7. How much "control" do you imagine you have over the people and events that you're banking on to come through for you?

8. Are you realizing you have far less control than you once imagined? How so? What has a felt loss of control or predictability done for you?

DAY 3: Fear: driven deeper by a quest for "answers."

1. When we go through times of suffering, we want a "**reason.**" We falsely assume that if we just had a reason why, then it would make suffering easier to take.
2. This wrongly assumes two things:
 - a. Instead of one reason for our suffering there may be a hundred. Just hearing of one reason for our suffering would likely create more confusion, not contentment.
 - b. It assumes we would **understand** the reasons, and **value** the reasons like God does.
3. God does offer us **understanding**, but it is a very different kind of understanding than we want (answers).

*Job 28:20 "Where then does wisdom come from? Where does **understanding** dwell?*

²¹ *It is hidden from the eyes of every living thing, concealed even from the birds of the air.*

²² *Destruction and Death say, 'Only a rumor of it has reached our ears.'*

²³ ***God understands** the way to it and he alone knows where it dwells,*

²⁴ *for **he views the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens.***

²⁵ *When he established the force of the wind and measured out the waters,*

²⁶ *when he made a decree for the rain and a path for the thunderstorm,*

²⁷ *then **he looked at wisdom and appraised it; he confirmed it and tested it.***

²⁸ *And he said to man, **'The fear of the Lord--that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.'***

4. God is God. He is sovereign and eternal. We are finite and confined in time. What are some examples Job uses to contrast God's ability to understand and our inability to understand?

5. What kind of "understanding" does God have? What are its characteristics?

6. How is God's "understanding" different than our wanting to "understand" what's going on?

7. Job affirms that we need understanding, but not the kind of understanding we want (answers). The kind of understanding God offers is different than what we want:

a. It is enough to know that **God understands** our plight, and is using it redemptively in our lives. We, apparently, do not need to understand the details (answers).

b. The understanding He gives is found in Job 28:28. Re-write this verse in your own words:

DAY 4: Fear: How does God walk us through suffering?

1. When we get to Job 38, Job and his four friends are done talking. His four friends did not help Job, but made his plight more painful.
2. God, silent since Job 2, speaks. Job had demanded a hearing before God to plead his innocent case. Job's speeches were driven by the question, "Will God do what is right?" implying that God is not doing right by Job. Unbeknownst to Job, he has already had his hearing! Now, God speaks.
3. You might assume God would speak meekly in the face of Job's pain. Not so. God speaks boldly in the face of Job's pride and rebellion that has been the cause of much **inner turmoil** and pain.

Job 38:1 Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm. He said:

² *"Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?"*

³ *Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me.*

⁴ *"Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand.*

⁵ *Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it?*

⁶ *On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone--*

⁷ *while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?"*

4. What is the setting for God speaking? (v. 1). What is the significance of this?

5. Job has assumed he's seeing correctly, that he is wise, has knowledge of God's workings, and has understanding. What does v. 2 imply about Job's assumptions?

6. God does not tippy toe around Job's pain. Instead, He confronts Job's pride, self-righteousness and rebellion. God says, "*Brace yourself like a man. I will question you...*" What do you think God wants Job to understand about:

a. God?

b. Himself?

7. Most of today's passage has to do with God's power. But Job 38:7 gives us two pictures of the effects of God's creative power. What do each of these pictures suggest about God's heart?

a. "*the morning stars sang together*"- _____

b. "*the angels shouted for joy.*"- _____

8. When we go through times of suffering, or when we fear the worst, comfort doesn't come through explanations. It comes through understanding both God's power and His heart. He delights in us. What strikes you most about this?

DAY 5: Fear: become free from the need for blessings because God is our greater treasure.

1. God continues to speak in the same vein from Job 38-41. God does not give Job any "reasons" for his suffering. Our "politically correct" and "sensitive" times make reading these chapters difficult. It sounds like God leveling a sledge hammer against Job.

2. In some ways it is. What God is hammering is not Job himself, but something inside Job that is like granite.

a. Job **stubbornly refuses** to take a deeper look into heart to expose self-centeredness, self-righteousness, and his arrogant commitment to himself and his needs as a "first thing" priority.

b. Job's belief that if he just lives rightly, that blessings become a right. (demanding spirit)

c. Job's belief that because he is living rightly, he is the one in "control" of bringing blessings and fending off pain.

d. If these beliefs and commitments remain untouched, Job will never discover the wonder of the treasure that he really has in God. Blessings are a poor substitute! (The Ecclesiastes Experience)

Job 42:1 Then Job replied to the LORD:

² ***"I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted.***

³ *You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?' Surely I spoke of **things I did not understand, things too wonderful** for me to know.*

⁴ *"You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.'*

⁵ *My ears had heard of you but now **my eyes have seen you.***

⁶ *Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."*

3. The granite finally cracks under the thunderbolts of a jack hammer. Job realizes four important things. Next to each one, elaborate on what you think he realized.

a. *"I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted."*

b. *"I spoke of things I did not understand."*

c. *"...things too wonderful ..."*

d. *"My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you."*

4. Job ends up doing a "180". He "despises" himself. This is not suddenly being plunged into poor self-esteem. It is a necessary crushing of pride that makes the love of God for him all the more amazing! Job discovers a greater treasure than he ever would have discovered had not the dark clouds of suffering come his way.

5. The silver lining of fear is that it alerts us that we have inadvertently placed blessings as our highest priority, even over the treasure of knowing and being loved by God.