

Lesson 1: God's Heart for the Poor

Introduction:

In the ancient story, a man sat by the city dump. Though once blessed in many ways, he had about lost it all: his health, his wealth, and his children. Such a person was, in the eyes of that age, destitute. Health gave hope for the day's labor. Wealth was power to face the bigger trials. Children would mean protection and someone to lean upon in the closing years. All were now gone.

Along came three of his friends who had known him in the blessed times. They too sat down in consternation. Only in their case, the difficulty was not pain or hopelessness; rather, it was how to make sense of such troubles. They concluded: God must be angry at you because of your sins for you to suffer so." And that's just what they told him.

Question: What story is referred to here? _____

From ages ago we have this story of the troubles of Job. His three "friends" came to him and offered thoughts that were comforting, that is, comforting to themselves. **It is easier to deal with the problems of others in need if you decide that their troubles have been caused by their own willful sin. In that case, you can take part in the "justice" of the situation when you do not help at all.**

The People's Response:

Question: Have you ever not helped someone in need because you felt it was their fault?

Key Scripture: Job 42:7

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

- I. Job's state
- II. 1st Reaction
 - A. _____
 1. They mourned with Job
 - a. It was the custom of the day that they allowed the grieving person to express himself/herself first. This is why they grieved as Job grieved.
 - B. The church is good at _____!
 1. We see need and we feel sorrowful and we wish that something could be done and at times we can bear to see suffering.
- III. People's solution
 - A. Eliphaz Offers Council (4: 7-9)
 1. Eliphaz says _____.
 2. Eliphaz was a _____.
 - B. Bildad Offers Council (8:2-6)
 1. Bildad pleads with Job to _____ (8:5) which implies that he too felt it was Job's fault.
 - C. Zophar Offer's council (11: 4-6)
 1. Zophar blames Job _____ (vs. 6)
 - All these men gave Job unbiblical, ungodly council. (42:7)
- IV. Parallel
 - A. Eliphaz says that it is Jobs fault period.

1. This is how some people view poverty and because of this refuse to do anything. (They're poor because of their decisions)
 - B. Bildad says that it's Job's fault and he needs to repent.
 1. Some of us say it is your fault that you're poor and even more than that you need to get your act together and repent and then God will bring you out of this.
 - C. Zophar
 1. It is your fault that you're poor but God loves you.
 - a. This is what numerous Christians feel. We view them as irresponsible and undisciplined addicts but yet we still extend "artificial" grace to them.
 - b. We smile and hand out a gospel track and give them a bag lunch while not seeing them as people.
- We will never deal with the issue of poverty until we get passed our preconceived notions of the people.
 - If we come into the situation already believing negative things about people then we will do as Job's friends did and give unbiblical, unwise, and ungodly solutions to the problem. This is why the poverty rate has grown significantly over the years because we have tried to fix things in an unbiblical manor. This is a call to repentance! (42:7-9)

God's Response:

Question: How does God deal with need?

Key Scripture: Psalms 113

Key Verse: Psalms 113:7

He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap...

- V. What is the biblical way to handle poverty?
- A. God _____.
 1. Just like the church sees- God sees.
 - a. God isn't ignorant of what is going on in the world!
 - b. God is active and personal and gives special attention to the poor!
 - B. God _____.
 1. God takes them out of their situation
 - a. It doesn't say He first made sure that they weren't in poverty because of their own sin! He just acts mercifully!
 - C. God _____.
 1. He not only helps them out of poverty but restores them back to a place of dignity because He saw them as people of dignity!
 2. He gave them a vision and a hope again and He valued them.

Young Zeal:

VI. Elihu (Read 32:1-5) (Very short charge)

A. Right Response

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____