

To Bless Or Not To Bless

*"...the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away,
blessed be the name of the Lord."*

Job 1:21

Many years ago a professor of mine in seminary welcomed a newborn into his family. Those were the days when a new mother stayed in the hospital here in Canada for several days. Prior to his wife coming home with the new baby the father received an urgent call from the hospital. For unexplained reasons the little one had died.

As my professor drove to the hospital he wondered what he would say to his wife. Going up in the elevator to her room he thought of a verse that would help them through this crisis. As he entered his wife's room the first words she said to him were, "The Lord has given me a verse." He responded that the Lord had given him one as well. When they shared their verses it was discovered that they both had the same one. (Job 1:21)

This verse helped them to understand that God was there with them in this situation and that He was still in control even in the midst of their sorrow and confusion. In a situation where they could not possibly understand the providence of God they believed that God wanted them to trust Him instead of despairing.

Faith is having confidence in God when we do not know His purpose.

In our verse for today we hear Job speaking and submitting to the unknown purpose of God in his sorrow. He had already lost his wealth and his children had all died suddenly in a tragic accident. Soon he would lose his health and the loyalty of his wife. Then he would have supposed friends abuse him verbally. It was hard to imagine him being in a more difficult situation.

The verse states that Job "blessed" the name of the Lord. What does that mean? Well, what it means to bless is to praise a person. So when Job blessed the name of the Lord he was acknowledging the righteousness of God and that he accepted the actions of God in his situation.

We wonder how Job could honour God in the context of all that had happened to him. It is to be noted that Job said that both the good in his life and the suffering were from the hand of God. We may quarrel with Job's understanding of the source of his problems but Job is also sharing with us a way of coping with life's difficulties.

The most important thing here is to do what Job did. Job submitted to the situation and accepted the suffering without saying that God was wrong to bring such suffering on him. Acceptance of the unwanted thing is a most important step in moving forward with life.

Job glorified God by blessing Him even in the midst of his many questions. Philippians 4:6-7 tells us to bring our anxious thoughts and concerns to God, but to bring them with thanksgiving, with praise, and when we do God will give us a peace in the situation that is not understandable to those who do not know Him. A peace that will carry us through the difficulty even if we never know "why".

Whatever your difficulty today, seek to accept the unwanted matter and continue to worship and praise God. Call on the Lord to provide the needed grace to endure. Keep your eyes on Jesus and His suffering for you. Looking at Him can ease the sorrow of today and brighten the prospects for tomorrow.

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