



TIME OF GRACE®

I Should Praise God Even Though I'm Hurting?

Study Notes

Summary

When life is hard and it doesn't feel like God is doing enough to relieve us of the pain, we start to question God and his love for us. But, Pastor Mike warns, to do that is exactly what the devil wants. Instead, we can follow the example of a man named Job who suffered a level of pain and loss we can't begin to imagine. How can we respond like Job in the face of our darkest moments?

- **Job 1:13-15** — ¹³ One day when Job's sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, ¹⁴ a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby, ¹⁵ and the Sabeans attacked and made off with them. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"
- **Job 1:16** — ¹⁶ While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The fire of God fell from the heavens and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"
- **Job 1:17** — ¹⁷ While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and swept down on your camels and made off with them. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"
- **Job 1:18-19** — ¹⁸ While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, "Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, ¹⁹ when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"
- **Job 1:20a** — ²⁰ At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head.
- **Job 1:20** — ²⁰ At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship

- **Job 1:21-22** — ²¹ and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart.^[a] The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised." ²² In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.

- Big Idea: Give God _____.

Points to Ponder

1. Evaluate: The purest form of God's praise comes from people who are in pain.
2. Share with a friend (or your Life Group) the best blessings God has given you this year. Discuss how you would hope to react if God decided to take those blessings away.
3. Read 2 Corinthians 12:1-10. What do Job and the Apostle Paul have in common?
4. Study 2 Corinthians 8:1-5. List three things you learn about the Christians from Macedonia. How do these verses apply to your own life as a Christian?
5. Do you know someone who is suffering deeply? Let them know you are thinking about them, and share today's message via text or email.

Homework for Next Week

Read Job 2:11-13

Time of Grace Ministry
Seriously, God? I Should Praise God Even Though I'm Hurting?
Job 1:13-22
May 12, 2024

Pastor Mike Novotny

It's a serious question to start a sermon, I know. But if you were the devil, how would you do it? We sometimes think of the devil, Satan, demons, as being these dark forces that try to, like, horror movie style freak us out, keep us up at night, bump in the darkness, but that's not at all biblical. Read the bible and you'll find out that Satan's greatest goal, the thing that he stays up at night plotting and planning is simply this, to separate you and God from a relationship that is defined by love.

This idea that God is love, that God loves the world, that God loves me, that God is with me, that God gave his Son, that my sins are forgiven, I'm saved and that means so much to me, I want to love God back with my whole heart, my whole soul, my whole mind, my whole strength, I want to love my neighbor as myself to say thank you to God. That's the thing that Satan wants to get in the midst of. And he doesn't really care how he does it. He can make you super bitter at the church, and religion, and God, or he can just make you super busy with really good things that get in the way of the best thing. But he does care intensely that he does it. And people just like you don't go to bed tonight thinking, "God is so loving, and I love God so much."

There's a dozen different forms and tactics that Satan might use, but I think, if you look at history, you'd have to say that one of his most effective strategies ever has been pain, right? Sometimes pain drives people to the bible and to prayer. But what often happens? I bet what's happened to a lot of you is that pain becomes a question mark on the love of God, right? It's actually very logical and I understand why the tactic works.

I mean, if someone says they love you, and you're going through something hard, but they don't help you out of it, if someone has all the resources and power to fix your problem and they just sit back and don't, you got to start asking yourself the question, "Well, do they really love me?" And so, this biblical idea that God is so, so loving to us, and he's all mighty, and he's all powerful, and he speaks, and boom, all the stars exist... You put those two things together and it doesn't make sense. "If God is so powerful and so loving, why would I go through something this difficult?"

You know, I thought of that struggle when I read the things that many of you said. Either you've been through something really painful, maybe relational, maybe you're right in the midst of it now, and you don't have to think hard to apply this to your life, or maybe it's going to happen before this year is over. When life is hard for you like it's hard for all of us, what will you do? What will you say to yourself to pushback and resist one of the devil's greatest goals?

And I realized today, I've made the atmosphere kind of heavy in this room, I totally messed with our last amazing song of praise, sorry to the band about that, but I really want to prepare you, because this is the question that sends some people closer to God, and it pushes many people further, further away from God. There are some people, who because of the pain of life, have ended up, not just in dissolution with God, but a complete atheist denying his existence.

So, today, I realized what's at stake. I want to save you from that temptation, that moment. And to do so, I want to turn to the words of a man who suffered, probably more than all of us combined, an Old Testament guy named Job. I'm beginning today with verse 13. "One day when Job's sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, a messenger came to Job and said, 'The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby, and the Sabeans attacked and made off with them. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!' While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, 'The fire of God fell from the heavens and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!'"

Fire of God? Was it a meteor, a lightning storm, a supernatural Sodom and Gomorrah kind of moment? We don't know, but we know it wasn't manmade; it came from the heavens, and all 7,000 sheep, in an instant, gone. Over 50% of Job's net worth destroyed, and all of these innocent servants scorched and killed by the fire that fell from heaven.

Verse 17: "While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, 'The Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and swept down on your camels and made off with them. They put the servants to the sword, and I'm the only one who has escaped to tell you!' While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, 'Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It... It collapsed on them... and they're dead, and I'm the only one who has escaped to tell you!'"

Satan licked his lips, and angels who do not know the future held their breath. Job was a God-fearing man, but God had given him the greatest life of anyone around, and now, that life, in an instant, was completely gone. Would he fear God? Would he love him? Would he praise him? Would he shake his fists at the heavens, at the God who could have stopped it but didn't or would he fall on his knees and worship? All of heaven held its breath and all of hell did too. What would Job do?

Look at verse 20, it says, "At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then Job fell to the ground in worship." How could you say, "God, you're worth it." when he's the one directly or indirectly sovereign and in control over the pain that you've been through. Now, in just a second, I'm going to show you Job's answer to that question, how could he worship like this? But I have to tell you, what Job is about to say is not what I would say to you, right? Like, if you lost a kid today, if

there was a car accident and you lost loved ones today, if you were going through tragedy and you just broken-hearted, came into my office, I think what I would say to you are two things. I would say, "God is still here." And, "God is going to take you there. I know you're hurting, I grieve with you, 'but God is close to the brokenhearted.' Psalm 34:18. God is here in the midst of the trouble; the world is falling apart but God is constant." I would tell you that, and I would say, "As much as this hurts, it will not hurt forever, right? God is going to take you to a place, heaven, where there's no pain, or grief, or funerals, or mourning, or crying, or tragedy, or confusion. We're going to get through this because God is here, and this is going to end, and that eternal happiness would begin."

But that's what I would say to you in the midst of your suffering, but that is not what Job says. He doesn't fall to the ground in worship and say, "God, thank you for still being here even though my kids aren't." He doesn't say, "God, I'm worshipping you today because you promised me eternal life, where I won't feel like this forever." That's not what Job says. What he says is incredible. Check out what he says in verse 21. "'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised.' In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing."

He came into the world with nothing, and to Job, logically, that means that God had given him everything. If he had a family, it was because of God. If he had children, it was because of God. If he had sheep, or camels, or oxen, or whatever, God had chosen to give it. "The Lord gave," Job confessed, "and he takes away." At the end of my life, when I die -- We even say this today, don't we? You can't take it with you. There's no U-Haul on the back of the hearse. We're not going to pack in your pets into your coffin, that would be weird, and it wouldn't work, right? We're going to strip you naked; we're going to wash you clean, we're going to comb your hair, we're going to put on your favorite suit, we're going to put you in a box, and you can't take anything with you. Naked you come in, naked you go out, and everything in between those two naked days is up to God. He gives it, and he can take it.

It's what some Christians call "The Teaching of Stewardship." You heard that word before? Stewardship is just the fancy way of saying if there's anything good in your life, you don't own it, God is just letting you manage it, right? You got shoes on your feet, you got money in your bank, you got good health, strength, you have a business that you own, you have a family that you're caring for, that's not your stuff, God gave it. You didn't come into this world with it, that means that God gave it, and if God owns it, he has every right to take it back. That is the baseline belief that will save you from bitterness, and anger, and questioning the love of the God who is love.

Let me actually invite Pastor Michael here on stage so we can show you what this looks like. Now, while I'm preaching here today, I make sure I don't have my phone with me. If I did, some of my friends would punk me and call me in the middle of the sermon. So, I may not have a phone with me, but let's assume I need to make a call so I say, "Hey, can I borrow your phone?"

>> Yeah, sure.

>> And because he's nice, he gives me the phone, so I type in the number, I make a call, I wrap up the call.

>> Uh, could I have my phone back?

>> Who do you think you are? What gives you the right to take this from me?

>> It's mine. [Laughing]

>> The acting of Pastor Michael Ewart. Thank you very much, Pastor Michael.

Right? That's so obvious when it comes to a phone, right? Now, what if that phone represents everything good that God gives? Naked I come into this world and anything I get is me saying, "God, would you please?" And in his kindness and love, he says, "Sure." In the moment that comes, when he says, "Can I have that back?" It's illogical to say, "Who do you think you are?" He says, "It's mine, and so, I can give you the gift or I can take it away." Or as Job so beautifully says, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised." And if you do this, like Job, you will not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.

To drive this home, grab a pencil or pen and write this down in your programs. The key, the big idea that Job learns from suffering is this, "Give God the right." Give God the right. Make a decision, right now, in your heart and mind to give God the right to give or to take away, to bless you abundantly or to do so sparingly. Give God the right and you won't accuse God of doing you wrong.

So, friends, here's the question, will you give God the right? Your answer to that question and the extent to which you answer it will determine the closeness of your loving relationship with God, right? Today, as hard as it would be, as unthinkable as it is to think about, will you give God the right to all of it? Like, "God, I want to have a good day today, please, but if you don't, you have the right. God, I want this lump to be nothing, but if it isn't, I give you the right. God, I want my marriage to get through this, I'm going to do everything I can to help with that, but if it doesn't work, if I'm Googling the number of the nearest lawyer, I give you the right. I want people to be nice to my kids in school, but even if they're not, even if it's bad experience, God, you have the right.

Give me money, take it. Give me health, take it. Give me love, take it. Give me everything, give me nothing, at the end of the day, God, you have the right." Will you believe that? If not, I don't know what to tell you. And if you do, I'm so happy for you because you will be prepared through all the ups and the downs that life always is to worship and praise the one constant presence in your life, God.

Now, if that freaks you out, and I'm sensing it does, let me give you just one bit of help, actually Job is going to give us a little bit of help. There's something you might

not know about the Book of Job. In the Book of Job, there's two primary names used for God. In the Hebrew there -- the word that we translate God, in Hebrew it's "Elohim" and it has the connotation of power, strength, and might. And then there's this other name used for God, the Lord, it's sometimes in all capitals, it's the word "Yahweh" and it means, I am. God just is, he's present, he's constant, he makes a promise and then he keeps it.

For almost all of the Book of Job, the name "Yahweh," the Lord, is never used especially when Job and his friends argue for 35 straight chapters. Just God, God, God, God, God, God, God. Power, power, power, power, power. "Why, why God? Why God? Why God? Why God?" But in the opening of Job, and in his response, when he thinks about the God who has taken everything, did you notice what he called him? Let me show you upon the screen. Job said, "The Lord gave... and the Lord has taken away; may the name of... the Lord be praised." Yahweh, Yahweh, Yahweh. I am, I am, the promise keeping God, the promise keeping God, the promise keeping God. It's almost as if Job is only able to worship at the bottom because he knows there is a God who will be there with him.

And friends, you can believe that too. And if you're struggling, if you're in the midst of that pain, if your love and passion for God is like this flickering flame that's about to be snuffed out, I just want you to think about the connections between that Jesus and this Job. You know, Jesus was the greatest too. He didn't have 11,500 animals, he had 10,000 times 10,000 angels. He was the greatest in the Kingdom of God, and yet he gave it all up.

Two thousand years ago in the little town of Bethlehem, Jesus was born naked from his mother, Mary, and 33 years later, he would die, most historians believe naked, on a Roman cross. His father had given to him and his father took it away, Jesus grieved. Job tore his robe, Jesus had his robe stripped from him; Job shaved his head, Jesus' head was crowned with a crown of thorns; Jesus, like Job, had questions for God, "Why God? Why God?" And yet, just like Job, Jesus didn't accuse his father of doing him wrong. He didn't sin, instead, he suffered for you.

And the good news of the bible is that Jesus went through that, he praised God even in the midst of the storms so that you would know this, that God is not just the one who owns everything, God is the one that has done everything so that you and he would be together forever, so that if this week is the hardest week you've had in a long time, you can say, "But God is here and he's coming back soon. I'm going to get through this with his help one day at a time, and then one day will come when I will see his face, and I will be so glad I didn't turn on him." And Satan will wail as you stand in faith, and strength, and believe in the depth of your soul he's not just God, it's not the Judge gives and the Judge takes, it's the Lord, my Savior, a God that must be so good.

Friends, for your sake, your soul's sake, your family's sake, give God the right just like my mom did. Do you know why I'm standing here preaching about the love of Jesus today? You'd say, "Because you're the pastor." Yes. Well, how did I end up the pastor

here at this church? Some of you would say, "Because, seven years ago, we asked you to be our pastor and you said, 'Yes.'" Yeah. Well, why was I a pastor? "Because you went to pastor school sometime?" Yes, I did. How did I end up in pastor school? Because when I was a teenager, I was reading my bible at home like I did every day, and there was something Jesus said that made me want to be a pastor, and so I did. Well, you'd say, "Well, why were you reading your bible at home? Most teenage boys play video games, not read their bibles, why were you reading yours?" And the answer would be, because we had this pastor at our church who really inspired me to come to church and want to read the bible. And you'd say, "Wow, well, how did you end up at that church?" And the answer is my mom.

I'm super blessed right now. My mom and my dad, and my mother-in-law, and my wife, and my kids all come to this church, but back in those days, it was just Judy. You've heard of Judge Judy? This was Just Judy. Judy bringing me. Judy sometimes dragging me. Judy keeping me connected.

Some of you know that story, and if you're a Christian mom, we thank God for you, but here's something you don't know, something that my mom gave me permission to share with you today. My mom had to give God the right. I was raised as the youngest kid in my family, but technically, I am not the youngest kid. I have no memory of him, but I've seen pictures of me holding him, my little brother, Jimmy. James was born really sick, and he only stayed on this earth for six weeks. My parents had wanted another kid, God had given, and then way too quickly, God took. And my mom had been raised as a Jesus loving, church going, prayer praying woman, but now the hardest thing in her entire life had happened, she had lost a child. What would she do? And the answer is, praise God for me, for us.

She gave God the right, she called the pastor, she ran to the church. As she would tell me in a recent text, "I had nowhere else to go but God." In her grief, my mom worshipped Jesus. And because she did, I know Jesus. And now, through all the ups and downs that I've been through in life, I know that I have Jesus. So, friends, I'm asking you, I'm hoping for you, I'm pleading with you, give God the right. He's not just God, he's the Lord. And you know he has to be good because of what he did for you. Let's pray.

Dear God, the father of lies does not want us to believe that truth. There's something in our life, and maybe he knows already what it is that we think we own, it's ours, and even you, God, don't have the right to touch it. God, as much as we don't want to think about that, help us to think about that, to confess it and to believe it. You can take it God. We're praying today that you don't take it, but if you do, we still love you because we know how deeply you loved us.

Thank you, Jesus, for everything that you gave. If it wasn't for the cross, we would always have a good reason to question, why? We'd have a reason to question your love and your character, but the fact that you did that for us despite our doubts, despite our sins, despite our struggles, God, the fact the you did that for your enemies, for sinful people, is the best proof in human history that you must be love,

and so we hold on to your heart today, we do believe in you. Now help us overcome our unbelief.

There are things that we believe about you now because it's light out in our lives, but when it turns dark, if it turns dark, help us not to change our faith but to be constant just like you are constant with us.

Oh, God, I thank you for my mom. She has often wondered how her kid became a pastor, like she didn't do enough, but God, in that moment, she did. She just showed up and kept me connected to the word that gushes with love and life. Thank you for her and I thank you for everyone who is here today despite the pain, everyone who will say "Amen" to this prayer because they still believe that you are God and you are good.

Thank you, that every day you are proving the devil wrong, that we Christian people are not using you, God, we actually love you because we believe, through Jesus, that you loved us first, so it's in his name that we boldly and joyfully pray, and if you agree as God's child, lift up your voice and say "Amen."