

CLING TO WHAT IS GOOD-REVISITED (ROMANS 12:9-21)

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Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. **Cling to what is good.** Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; **bless and do not curse.** Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
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To address some of what Paul was saying, let us go back in time, which was likely during the time of the Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and look to the story of Job. In **Job 3:20-26**, Job in his torment and misery said this, "Why is light given to him who is in misery, and life to the bitter of soul, who long for death, but it does not come, and search for it more than hidden treasures; who rejoice exceedingly, and are glad when they can find the grave? Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, and whom God has hedged in? For my sighing comes before I eat, and my groanings pour out like water. For the thing I greatly feared has come upon me, and what I dreaded has happened to me. I am not at ease, nor am I quiet; I have no rest, for trouble comes." You ever been there, or maybe are there now, on some level? This passage of Scripture in the book of Job, is part of the story of Job, who at the beginning of the story is described as a "man [who] was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil." He had seven sons and three daughters. He had 7000 sheep, 3000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen (which I guess means he had 1000 oxen), and 500 female donkeys. Therefore we could say then that he was a really rich man but he was also a man who feared God and walked in God's ways. Yet all in one day, his oxen and donkeys were stolen by raiders and his servants who were tending them were killed, fire from heaven killed all his sheep and the servants watching them, raiders also stole his camels and killed the servants watching over them, and the house that his sons and daughters were dining in collapsed from a great wind and killed them all. Now that's what you call having a bad day. What we can read to be the background of this series of tragic events is that God allowed Satan to do all of those things to Job. It was not God who did all of that, but He ALLOWED it to happen. Just as He did to the Israelites He tested them

in their time of wandering around the wilderness for 40 years. What we can learn from this story is that in all circumstances, no matter how bad they get, that we must wait on the Lord, cling to what is Good, bless & not curse. For God is good and His mercy does endure forever, just as it says in **Psalms 100:5**, "For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations."

So what did Job say after all that had happened to him? Well he said a lot of things as he had back and forth dialogue with his friends throughout the story. But to begin with in **Job 1:21** he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; **Blessed be the name of the Lord.**" And then it says this in **Job 1:22**, "In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong." That could be reworded to say that Job continued to fear God and cling to his faith. That faith was expressed by continuing to fear God and to not sin against God. That faith was expressed in the hope that God will deliver him, God will right the wrong, God will bring all things into judgment;... in His time. Sadly, for Job, his suffering didn't end there. A short time later Job ended up with boils all over his body which intensified his misery and pain. Then if that weren't enough Job's wife told Job to just curse God and die. Where was wise counsel, or really comfort for Job when he needed it? But Job responded by saying in **Job 2:10**, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" And it says that, "In all this Job did not sin with his lips."

Then if that weren't enough, Job's three friends showed up to console and comfort their suffering friend. They tore their robes and sat with Job in the dirt for seven days and seven nights. Yet after that Job cried out in his anguish and basically was saying to God that he wished he hadn't been born. This leads us to our passage of Scripture today, where we are told to bless and not curse and cling to what IS GOOD! So what about what Job said, "Why is light given to him who is in misery, and life to the bitter of soul?" In the midst of his suffering he asks, what good is it if he has life when it is filled with misery, if he has sunshine, and even perhaps a cool breeze, while he sits in the dirt suffering. While thankfully none of us I hope are suffering as Job did, I think we can all relate to what he is saying. What is the point of this life that we have to where as King Solomon said, "as it happens to a fool, it happens to me." (**Ecclesiastes 2:15**) And what about **Isaiah 57:21** that says "There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked." As long as we are on this earth, that is a fallen creation, which means that sin abounds on this earth and it has been cursed by God because of that sin, there will be times of grief, pain and suffering. Just as we have a sun that burns, ants that bite, thorns that stick in our hands and feet, and other people that give us nothing but grief.

But Jesus promises us this, "These things I have spoken to you, that **in Me you may have peace**. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (**John 16:33**) King Solomon expounded on that by saying "in much wisdom is much grief, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow." (**Ecclesiastes 1:18**) In fact, the more we get to know God, knowing that He is perfect in all of His Ways (**2 Samuel 22:31**) and His Works (**Deut. 32:4**), the uglier and more disgusting this world looks to us, including the ungodly counsel we may receive at times from our "friends". Job had his wife telling him to curse God and die and later after his friends were so kind to just sit with Job in the dirt for seven days, once they began to have dialogue, Job had to listen to his friends tell him that all of his pain and suffering was because of **his sin**.

"As it happens to a fool, it happens to me." Job, was described as being blameless and upright but was having to suffer as the fool. He had to endure listening to foolish counsel in the midst of his suffering. Another Scripture that is brought up regarding this topic of bad, falling upon the good as well as the bad, is in **Matthew 5**. People will quote it saying "it rains on the just as well as the unjust," as though that were a bad thing that falls on all people. But really, in context of what Jesus was talking about there is, starting with **verse 43**, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." (**Matthew 5:43-48**) Life has been given by God to all who dwell on the earth. The other blessings mentioned is that God gives light and rain to all on the earth, whether they are good or bad. We are all blessed with the good things in creation as well as we all are confronted with the evil that is upon the earth.

Job went so far as to say that God has hedged him in. There was no escape from the pain, suffering, and sorrow that Job had to deal with. He was in a place where all he longed for was the end of his life. How could his life ever be rectified, or made right from all that he had gone through? He lost all of his animals and his sons and daughters, he lost his servants that tended his animals. His wife was telling Job to curse God and die, and his friends were accusing Job that all of his problems were because of his sin. His future prospects looked bleak to put it mildly. Yet what did Job do in his time of suffering and sorrow? **He cried out to God**. He pleads his case before the Lord. Yet Job says this in **Job 9:15**, "For though I were

righteous, I could not answer Him; **I would beg mercy of my Judge.**" He knew there was nothing to say to God but to cry out for His mercy. Yes, he also sought out understanding from God. He says in **Job 10:2-3**, "I will say to God, 'Do not condemn me; **show me why You contend with me.** Does it seem good to You that You should oppress, that You should despise the work of Your hands, and smile on the counsel of the wicked?"

In the end, Job was healed of the boils, and it says in **Job 42:10** that "the Lord restored Job's losses when **he prayed for his friends.** Indeed the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before." It's interesting how Jesus, as well as what we read from the Apostle Paul, that we are to love and pray for our enemies, that it rains on the just and the unjust (God blesses the just and the unjust with sunshine and rain) and then that Job was restored double what he lost **after he prayed for his friends.** We may think to ourselves that we have it all together with God, but yet look around you. Look at all of the people God puts in our path that we can be praying for, people that we can be a light to in this dark, evil world. We don't know who God will show mercy on, who God will deliver, who God will save and set free. What we do know is that God alone is God Almighty, ruler of the heavens and the earth, Creator of all things. One more thing to mention, as God restored to Job twice what he lost, yet what is certain is that Job had some scars that would still remain, maybe even physical scars from the boils that covered him from head to toe.

He likely needed to be renewed in his spirit and have his broken heart restored. He also didn't get back the sons and daughters that he loved and surely missed. He still was married to a wife that told him to curse God and die. He still had friends that had grieved him something awful in his time of suffering. In all things, sometimes our faith, clinging to what IS GOOD, the only thing ONE who will not change, and the only One who calls for us to trust in Him, and that is Christ Jesus, our Savior and Lord. He has given us the promise of eternal life in Christ Jesus. He has promised us eternal rewards and a life eternal without pain, suffering, sorrow, death, or loss. That day is coming. Therefore, as Paul said in **Romans 12:9**, "cling to what is good." (Greek: kollomenoi. Kolla=glue) There is only One who will not change, there is only One who is perfect in Justice and Righteousness. He will one day right the wrong. He will one day deliver us from the evils of this world. He will one day bring all things into His perfect judgment. But we must wait on and cling to what is Good. For God is good and His mercy does endure forever (**Psalm 136:1**). Lastly, His light and life has been given to all of creation. We must remember that it rains on the just and the unjust, yet it is up to God at the final judgment to sort it all out. Meanwhile as we cling to Jesus, let us continue to love one another and pray for one another. Don't give up the faith for sometimes it may be all that we have to cling to. God is Good!