

Harmful Words

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[0 : 00] Thanks guys. My name is Alistair. I'm the assistant here and I'm going to continue our reading in Job chapter 10. This is Job speaking and he now turns his attention to God.

In Job chapter 10 verse 1 it says, I loathe my very life, therefore I will give free reign to my complaint and speak out of the bitterness of my soul.

I say to God, do not declare me guilty, but tell me what charges you have against me. Does it please you to oppress me, to spurn the work of your hands while you smile on the plans of the wicked?

Do you have eyes of flesh? Do you see as a mortal sees? Are your days like those of a mortal and your years like those of a strong man? That you must search out my faults and probe after my sin. Though you know that I am not guilty and that no one can rescue me from your hand. Your hands shaped me and made me. Will you now turn and destroy me?

[1 : 05] Remember that you molded me like clay. Will you now turn me to dust again? Did you not pour me out like milk and curdle me like cheese? Clothed me with skin and flesh and knit me together with bones and sinews?

You gave me life and showed me kindness and in your providence watched over my spirit. But this is what you concealed in your heart.

And I know that this was in your mind. If I have, if I sinned, you would be watching me and would not let my offense go unpunished. If I am guilty, woe to me.

Even if I am innocent, I cannot lift my head. For I am full of shame and drowned in my affliction. If I hold my head high, you stalk me like a lion and again display your awesome power against me. You bring new witnesses against me and increase your anger towards me. Your forces come against me wave upon wave. Why then did you bring me out of the womb?

[2 : 12] I wish I had died before any eye saw me. If only I had never come into being or had been carried straight from the womb to the grave. Are not my few days almost over?

Turn from me so that I can have a moment's rest before I go to the place of no return to the land of gloom and utter darkness. To the land of deepest night of utter darkness and disorder, where even the light is like darkness.

That is a very long and difficult passage. So let's turn to our great God in prayer and ask for his strength as we focus on it. Let's pray together. Father, we come to passages like this and we have so many questions.

We have so many thoughts. And Lord, we ask this morning that you would still our hearts. That you would take distractions away from us. And Lord, would you help us focus on your word.

Father, I pray that I would decrease and you would increase. And may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be pleasing to you, our rock and our redeemer.

[3 : 28] Amen. It'll be really helpful if you have that passage open in front of you as we focus on it this morning. But I wonder if you've ever heard the rhyme. Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.

You've probably heard that before. It often gets thrown around on playgrounds at school. Maybe like me, you yourself have even used it when you were called names or teased as a child.

But the more experience we have under our belts, the more we go on in life, we realize that words can do more harm than physical attacks.

And the scars that they leave, whilst they aren't visible, can be just as damaging. If we are constantly hearing the same harmful words, then there will come a point where we actually start to believe it's true.

Maybe you've been told lies repeatedly over the years that you're worthless. That you're a waste of space. That you're nothing.

[4 : 37] Those are lies. But they leave a lasting impression on a person. They leave unseen wounds that hurt and continue to hurt years later.

And so a more realistic rhyme is, sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will hurt forever. That's what we're going to think about this morning in Job chapter 8 through to chapter 10. And Job is sitting on the ash heap, remember, with his friends or so-called friends all around him. Eliphaz has spoken to him from a kind of philosophical, uber-spiritual approach, saying that he had a vision and he understands Job's suffering.

He knows what's going on. And so whilst Eliphaz wasn't nice in what he said to Job in chapters 4 and 5, the way he said it was reasonably nice.

It was okay. But this morning we listen into the conversation between Bildad and Job. And Bildad proves that words do hurt. In fact, it's as if Bildad is deliberately trying to inflict more pain on Job.

[5 : 51] So if Eliphaz's response was a bit more philosophical, Bildad's response is that of a traditionalist who has zero sympathy and offers no comfort to his friend in pain, but instead seems to pour lemon juice on an open wound.

So we're going to look at Job 8 to 10 under two headings, words that wound and the words of the wounded. So the first thing we see in this section of Job in chapter 8 are words that wound, words that wound.

So Eliphaz was the subtle voice who was measured in his tone to Job. In contrast to that, Bildad is like a wrecking bull. He is a bull in a china shop or a vicious dog who goes right for the jugular. Bildad comes to essentially the same conclusion as Eliphaz, that Job is suffering because of some sin in his life, but his approach is slightly different. And that's why studying these cycles of speeches is really helpful because it gets us thinking through how we understand suffering today and the worldviews that we let influence us.

And these speeches tell us how not to speak to a friend in that pain. So Bildad starts, read with me, in verse 2. To Job he says, How long will you say such things?

[7 : 19] Your words are a blustering wind. And so he sees his friend in agony on an ash pile. And basically he says, Job, snap out of it.

How long are you going to keep going on like this? And then he insults him by saying at the end of verse 2 that he's just full of hot air. Bildad is angry.

He is frustrated at Job's response to Eliphaz and he is impatient. See, Job has been on that ash heap for months. Bildad and his friends have arrived on the scene about a week or so ago and Bildad has already lost the rag with Job.

He has no desire to comfort him and no desire to sympathize with him. Now comforters are supposed to be patient and we are supposed to be in it for the long haul.

Don't get me wrong. It is hard to comfort people over the long haul. It isn't easy. As you sit with those who suffer, you need to know that their suffering won't be over in a week.

[8 : 30] You need to stick it out with them. We need to make the conscious, self-sacrificing decision to walk alongside those who are suffering and to sit with them in their pain.

For those of us who are looking on on someone else's suffering, it's really easy to become impatient, isn't it? And to think that the event or the cause of that suffering took place in the past, so surely they should be fine by now.

As comforters, we can move on very quickly from things that have happened. But for those who have been affected directly by suffering, it can take time and those wounds may never actually heal properly.

The death of a loved one will always leave a void in someone's life. Past trauma can leave scars that make every single day difficult.

Illnesses can make what seems to be a simple task impossible to us. Our job as a community, who are called to care for each other well, is to be patient.

[9 : 48] We need to be in it for the long haul. We cannot be impatient like Bildad and expect people just to get over their suffering. And so Bildad has listened to Job's lament and his outpouring of grief.

And his response is he's fed up. He's angry because he thinks that Job's questioning is a sign of unfaithfulness. And so Bildad insults Job out of anger and we see why in verse 3.

Bildad says, does God pervert justice? Does the Almighty pervert what is right? And so Bildad's assessment of God is 100% correct.

God is completely just. There is no measure of wavering in him. And this is the difficult thing with Job's friends because some of the things they say are spot on.

They get it right. But often, and most of the time, the conclusions that they draw from that are completely wrong. So this is the foundational statement of Bildad's argument.

[10:51] God is completely just. But it only takes the next sentence to see how wrong his conclusion is. Read verse 4 with me.

Bildad speaking to Job says, Bildad says, Bildad says, Bildad says, Bildad says, Job, your kids are dead because they sinned and if you keep going like this, you're next.

Bildad has no idea what's going on. He has no idea that this is Satan's attempt to trick Job into cursing God. Bildad doesn't know that this is God's test to prove the genuineness of Job's faith.

Friends, we need to be very, very careful of the words we use and the conclusions that we draw about someone suffering because our wounds, our words can wound.

In verse 4, Bildad says, God is just, Job. That is why your kids died. In verses 5 to 7, he says, turn to God, do good, and he will restore you, very much focusing on material possessions.

[12:19] He has a very black and white worldview. So for Bildad, if you do good, God will reward you. And if you do bad, you will be punished. And we see this worldview all over the place today, don't we?

Maybe it's a worldview that we even have ourselves. As Christians, often when things go wrong in our lives, we're tempted to think that God is punishing us for our sins, either past or present.

So often we're tempted to think that God is afflicting us because we deserve it. But friends, the problem with that worldview is that it leaves no room for forgiveness.

It leaves no room for redemptive suffering. In short, that worldview leaves no room for Jesus Christ.

To believe God rewards good and punishes evil in the lives of his people now is simplistic.

And it is not what the Bible teaches. But it is what many Christians believe today. I've been told that if only I had enough faith and prayed more, I could have healed all of my illnesses.

[13:28] I was in a wheelchair at one point and was told that I would be able to walk pain-free if only I asked for forgiveness and started living the proper Christian life.

I've had friends. Friends who lost a child. And in the middle of that suffering, someone said to them, if only you'd had enough faith and prayed, that child would still be alive.

Friends, that is a false gospel. And it puts all the responsibility on us. Weak human beings and not on the completed work of the ruling and reigning Jesus Christ.

Now maybe you've said these things to people before. And if you have, I would encourage you to go and ask them for forgiveness and say, that's not what the Bible teaches. That's not what God is like.

Because the only way we can get through this life is because of the hope that God gives us through the gospel. The life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

[14:52] Suffering is often the thing that causes us to come to the end of ourselves. And in that moment, we have to run towards God. The rest of the Bible says suffering is to be expected in life and that it has a purpose.

It has a meaning. We may not know what that is. We may never know. But it is not meaningless. And Christians do not suffer now because God is punishing his people.

So how has Bildad come to that conclusion? Well, as a traditionalist, he looks to the past. We see that in verse 8 where he says to Job, ask the former generations and find out what their ancestors learned.

For we were born only yesterday and know nothing and our days on earth are but a shadow. So the former generations and their apparent wisdom are the traditions of moral and religious people.

Now learning from the past is not a bad thing. But the problem is that Bildad doesn't see that the wisdom of his ancestors is still imperfect.

[16:01] Just because something happened in the past doesn't mean that it is the wisest and best thing for all of time. But also, only looking back, as Bildad is telling Job to do, leaves no room for what God might be doing in the present.

Bildad is too busy feeling like he needs to defend God's honour. So he comes up with the right answer that God is just but with the wrong conclusions.

And to drive his point home, Bildad uses three illustrations. Plants in verses 11 to 13, a spider's web in verses 14 and 15 and a shallow-rooted plant in verses 16 and 19.

Bildad is saying that the wicked are those who put their trust in stuff rather than God. And like a spider's web, it is all fragile and it will collapse.

Or that they are like flowers. The wicked are like flowers. That they have the appearance of life. But that their wickedness will lead to death. It's kind of like a bouquet of flowers that you buy from the shop and put on your dining room table.

[17:17] They look nice for a few days but they've been severed from their roots. And so, they are actually dead. And it will only take a few days for those signs of death to show themselves.

That's like the wicked, Bildad says. And in verse 13, he says to Job, Job, basically, that's you. Everything that has been stripped away from you because you've forgotten God and because you're wicked.

And so, with blow after blow, Bildad rains his attack on Job and he ends it in verses 20 to 22 where he says, Surely God does not reject one who is blameless or strengthen the hands of evildoers. He will yet fill your mouth with laughter and your lips with shouts of joy. Your enemies will be clothed in shame and the tents of the wicked will be no more. Bildad says, Job, if only you were a good guy. If only you did what was right in front of God, none of this would be happening to you. These are words that wound.

[18:27] Words devoid of grace with no concept of undeserved suffering, no idea of suffering for God's glory and no concept of forgiveness. Job's suffering is not as black and white as that.

We know that life is not as black and white as that. Even for those who have completely messed up and gone against God every single opportunity they can in their lives, there is still forgiveness and grace through Jesus Christ.

let's never be those friends who pour more insults on open wounds without any godly wisdom because it misrepresents God and it hurts our friends.

Half the time the reason people move churches is not because of theological differences but because of hurtful words of other Christians. Now we need to sit with those who are in pain.

We should never assume we know the reason behind their suffering but we are to point them to the hope that is found in the gospel. The promised presence of God even in the trenches and midst of great suffering and we need to be that shoulder for people to cry on in their times of need.

[19:50] Bildad is arrogant and he thought that he knew what was going on. His words were daggers that were plunged into Job's heart inflicting pain and because Bildad wasn't suffering he thought he was wise and he had all the right answers.

Friends, please never be a Bildad. Let's not be Bildad. Let's not assume we know everything but let's be patient with those who suffer and let us support them well.

So Bildad spoke words that wound and the second thing we see in this passage are the words of the wounded in chapters 9 and 10 the words of the wounded.

In the midst of great suffering we don't always say what we actually think right? So we may know that something is true but in that moment of agony logic seems to just go out the window.

the pain is overbearing and the words that often leave our mouths without thinking it through properly is quite normal. What we say isn't always right and that is the same with Job.

[21:05] In these two chapters and in other parts of the book Job says things about God that aren't right and aren't true. But at the end of the book in Job chapter 42 verse 7 God commends Job for having spoken what is right.

So how do we handle this apparent contradiction? Because God affirms in both the beginning and the end of the book of Job that he is a genuine believer.

So this apparent contradiction can be resolved by understanding that whilst Job knows the truth about God and he believes the truth about God in the midst of his pain he doesn't feel it.

And so he says wrong things about God and if you have suffered at all in your life you know how easy it is to be swept up in the feelings of pain and in the emotions of suffering.

We might say that God is unloving that he has abandoned us even though that is not true. We might say that God doesn't care.

[22:14] because we don't understand what's going on. That's not true. We might even say that God doesn't love us because he is allowing such great suffering to happen in our lives.

Friends, that is not true. You are never ever beyond the love of God. And in those moments of suffering we need to remember the truth about who God is and the truth that our circumstances, our pain, our suffering, our emotional and mental turmoil, our shame, our guilt, our feelings of despair are in no way, absolutely no way, a representation of how God views us.

so let's listen to the words of the wounded. Read chapter 9 verse 2 with me. Job says, Indeed, I know that this is true, but how can me immortals prove their innocence before God?

Though they wished to dispute with him, they could not answer him one time out of a thousand. Job says, I know that God is just.

I know that he is right in all that he does. I know that the wicked receive judgment from God. I know that God is perfectly just. But what I don't know, Bildad, is why I'm suffering.

[23 : 46] And in these two chapters, Job uses courtroom language. He wants to take God to court, basically, to put him on the stand and ask his questions. Job wants to make a defense of his own innocence because he sees no sin in his life that deserves such great suffering.

But he realizes that he cannot stand before God because God is so mighty. That's what verses 4 to 10 of chapter 9 are all about. Speaking about God, Job says that he is wise in heart and mighty in strength in verse 4.

That he can move mountains, verse 5. That he commands the sun in verse 7. That he put the stars in space in verse 9. Job is saying this is how big God is.

No one can contend with him. He is so mighty that no amount of words could even scratch the surface of his greatness. He is so wise that all the wise people in the world couldn't even begin to compare to how wise God is.

And God is beyond comprehension, Job says in verse 11. Now these verses in any other context would be a wonderful declaration of praise.

[25 : 07] And yet in this moment to Job it's a lament. Because he says, he thinks that this mighty, this powerful God has turned against him.

Job is saying, how can I even dream of standing before this kind of God and question him? He is too great. And so he sits on the ash heap and as he looks over his life and his suffering he's crying out and he's asking why?

Why has this great powerful God turned against me? Job then wrongly concludes in verses 12 to 21 of chapter 9 that God is unjust.

In the midst of his suffering Job is coming to the wrong conclusions because he doesn't see how his suffering could bring him any good. He knows that he is innocent and yet he says in verse 20 that even if he is innocent God would pronounce him guilty anyway.

And it brings Job to the point of despair and he despises his life. And the lament continues in chapter 10. Job's friends have basically been telling him to fake it until you make it.

[26 : 26] Slap a fake smile in your face and get on with life. And so Job says in chapter 10 verse 1 I loathe my very life. Therefore I will give free reign to my complaint and speak out in the bitterness of my soul.

And I say to God do not declare me guilty but tell me what charges you have against me. Tell me why? Does it please you to oppress me, to spurn the works of your hands while you smile on the plans of the wicked?

Job doesn't see what's going on. He knows that God is just but his situation is sending him into a spiral of confusion. In verses 8 to 12 Job speaks about how he is one of God's creations.

Verse 11 you clothe me with skin and flesh. You have granted me life and steadfast love. Verse 12 So why, why am I suffering? Verses 13 to 17 Job says if it's because I've sinned and I'm deserving of this agony reveal it to me.

Show me what I have done. Show me your evidence. Bring it to the courtroom and let's chat it out together. Let's sort it out. But he sees no sense and he loathes his life.

[27 : 53] So he says in verse 18 of chapter 10, why then did you bring me out of the womb? I wish that I had died before any eye saw me. If only I had never gone, never come into being, or had been carried straight from the womb to the grave.

Are not my few days almost over? Turn away from me so that I can have a moment's joy before I go to the place of no return, to the land of gloom and utter darkness.

Job says, God, leave me alone. Give me a few minutes of rest before I breathe my last and enter into an eternity of darkness and despair.

In his suffering, Job has lost all hope of eternity with God. God, he can't see the hope for all the despair in his life. Job is consumed with the question why.

Friends, have you been there? That place where you're looking at the situation around you and you're consumed by it and you see no hope, is the question of why eating you alive and all you want to do is scream it out?

[29 : 15] There is nothing wrong with voicing your frustrations. There is nothing wrong with asking the hard questions. They are not a sign of unfaithfulness.

They are not a sign of doubting God. It is a sign that you are genuinely wrestling with the situation and you want to understand what God's doing. That is a good thing. but you need to know that the answers may never come.

We may never truly understand what is going on but regardless of the outcome God never changes. God is good.

God is faithful. And in the midst of suffering it is important to keep on talking to God. Do not shut him out. keep on asking for the suffering to be gone.

Keep on asking for strength. Keep listening. God is listening. He has not abandoned you. Talking to him in the midst of great pain is important. And to accuse God of being unjust means that we think God owes us a good life.

[30 : 33] A life of joy and happiness all the time that it's unfair for any kind of suffering to come our way. But the book of Job isn't here to tell us that life is fair. It's here to tell us that even in this extreme suffering God is good.

God is sovereign. God is wise and God is 100% just. So friends in your pain ask the hard questions. God is God is God is God's love for or approval of you.

There is nothing you can do to stop you being his child. Job saw this mighty awesomeness wisdom and power of God and declares that it is impossible to stand before him.

in chapter 9 verse 2 he says how can a man be in the right before God? In chapter 9 verse 33 he cries out in frustration if only there was someone to mediate between us.

If only there was someone who could bring us together. If only there was one who could plead my cause before this holy God.

[31 : 50] Brothers and sisters we have that mediator. we have that person who is perfect, who is righteous, who is fully God and fully man.

The only one who can stand before a holy God on our behalf. We have Jesus. We have a mediator who stands before God and when Satan the accuser comes with his list of sins that we commit every single day and he says look at Alistair God, the greatest sinner of them all, Jesus says paid for.

Jesus says God the curse of your righteous wrath that Alistair deserves was taken on me as I hung on that cross.

And so Satan's accusations are muted because Jesus wins. Job thinks that he needs a mediator because in this moment he is not seeing the whole picture.

He's standing at the back of the tapestry seeing all the chaos and all the mess, all the cords leading nowhere and it makes no sense. But God is the good and loving father who stands at the front of the tapestry.

[33 : 18] He sees the whole picture and he is in control. God is weaving a glorious picture in your life that we don't see yet. We don't fully understand and we may never comprehend it in this life but we are in the hands of a good God.

Jesus is the perfect mediator who being fully God stepped in and took the ultimate suffering that we deserve. Friends, this is the mediator that Job wanted.

This is the mediator that we have. And in the middle of suffering, in the middle of the open wounds and the agony, in the middle of despair and the emotional, physical, mental pain, do not forget Jesus Christ who bridged the gap between you and God.

Jesus, God in the flesh, stepped into our suffering world, took on suffering himself so that we may be reunited with God and have eternal hope where suffering, sin and death are no more.

Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me is nonsense. words matter.

The words we hear in our suffering matter, the words we say in our suffering matter.

[34 : 46] But the most important words that you must remember as you're in the trenches in the despair of suffering is the cry of Jesus Christ on the cross as he said, it is finished.

that is the comfort that you need in your suffering. That is that there is an end to it all because Jesus paid it all.

Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain and he washed it white as snow. And when before the throne I stand, in him complete, Jesus died my soul to save, my lips shall still repeat.

Jesus paid it all. Let's pray together. Father, we come before you and we ask that in the good times and the bad, in the joys and happiness of life and in the sorrows and despair of suffering and turmoil, would you by your spirit help us remember the wonderful truths of who you are.

And Father, if there is anyone here in the building or listening at home who thinks that their circumstances are a representation of your love for them, Lord, I ask that by the power of the spirit you would transform their minds, that you would help them cling to that wonderful truth that Jesus has paid it all and it is only through him that we can stand boldly and declare that we belong to you, that we are part of your family because of Christ.

[36 : 43] Father, remind us of those truths in the difficulties of life. we ask this in Jesus' holy and precious name. Amen.