

## Talks – The Poor – myfishbites.com

When I first became a Christian, God gradually gave me a real heart for the poor, the homeless and the needy. It was a God-given love that came from his heart and expressed itself through my heart and actions. I joined a community action project as a volunteer for a long time and did what I could to make a difference in people's lives in my city.

Thing is, as Christians, we're often real bad at expressing God's love. Maybe we don't know how, maybe we don't know where, maybe we just don't care or have priorities elsewhere. However, God is very concerned about the poor and needy, the orphan and the widow..

When we look in the Bible there is the amazing standard of Jesus, but one Old Testament figure stands out as having a righteousness and concern for the poor and needy that is quite amazing. Job.

The key chapter is Job 31. We'll try to do it justice!

### INTRO

As you know, Job has been attacked by Satan by having many bad things happen. He then is engaged in a very helpful conversation with his buddies who are presumably trying to help but, well, who needs enemies with these guys around!!

So let's quickly jump to Job 1.1-5 and then to Job 42.7-8. Between these 2 passages we see that Job was a very righteous man, that he honoured God and spoke the truth about God (unlike Job's friends). In fact, God asked Job to pray and offer a sacrifice on behalf of his friends so that God would not punish them (42.8). Amazing!

We see that Job's standard of righteousness was very high, that means he was real interested in his relationship with God, his lifestyle, his holiness, doing only what God wanted, he acted as intercessor (pray-er) on behalf of his family in case they may have sinned (1.5).

Pretty amazing stuff – but when we look in Job 31 we see how Job cared for the poor, the orphan, the needy and maintained an amazingly high standard of righteousness (being right before God). We'll look at 2 sections, one to do with his righteousness and another more specifically to do with the poor and needy..

### 1. Job's Righteousness

- a. He made an agreement with God not to look at a girl lustfully (v1)
- b. He was not dishonest and did not lie to others (v5)
- c. He did not turn away from doing right (v7)
- d. He did not use his body for wrong doing (v7)
- e. He did not desire another woman (v9)
- f. He was not unfair to any of his slaves (v13)
- g. He did not put his trust in gold or boast in his wealth (v24, 25)
- h. He did not worship money, wealth or idols (v26-28)
- i. He did not laugh at the troubles of an enemy (v29)
- j. He did not let his tongue speak evil or sin (v30)

k. He did not secretly hide his sins (v 33-34)

l. He was honest in his dealings with the land, he shed tears, he didn't break the spirit of those who worked the land (v38-39)

## 2. The Poor and the Needy (verses 16-21)

a. Never refused the appeals of the poor

b. Never let widows give up hope while looking for help

c. Not kept food for himself but given it to orphans

d. A father to orphans since he was young

e. Guided widows from birth

f. Not let anyone die for lack of clothes

g. Not let a needy person go without a coat

h. Never hurt an orphan, even when he knew he could win in court

## Did Job actually attain this standard?

Wasn't he just bigging himself up?

No.. Read Job 1.22: 'In all this Job did not sin or blame God.'

I find this standard of righteousness pretty extraordinary and feel completely humble and incompetent compared to this. God doesn't ask us to have a perfect standard, we no longer are in need of obeying the law of Moses because of the sacrifice of Jesus. Yet, this (like the example of Jesus) is something we should attain to. We don't have to be specially called to work on the streets of South America but should demonstrate this care in our everyday lives in the way that God calls us to.

## So what was Job's motivation in all this?

We find a few clues dotted around Job but let's look at a few verses..

– Job 1.1 we find that Job was honest and innocent, he honoured God and stayed away from evil. So Job was a good, righteous man. We already know that so let's dig deeper..

– Job 1.5. Job wasn't just obsessive about being clean or about being religious. He was worried about sin. Not just his own, but his family's sin. He wanted himself and his family pure in the sight of God.

– Job 1.20-21. After all the bad stuff has happened, when effectively all that is left is Job and God, we see the man broken to the core. These are the situations in our lives where the real 'us' emerges, when we can be made or broken. What about Job?

He shaved his head, got down on his knees and worshipped and praised God. This is a life dedicated to God, to his will and his way. We pray 'Your will be done, your Kingdom come' when we say the Lord's Prayer but Job actually meant it. He was heart broken, of course. But he also recognised that God is God and that what mattered was his relationship with God.

– Job 31.23. Job feared destruction from the Lord. This wasn't some worrying fear but a healthy fear of the power and might of God. Job feared the Lord. This is the healthy fear of God that means we stand in our rightful small place standing on holy ground, not even daring (or even being able) to look at the awesome, majestic, all-powerful God of everything.

This is the fear of the Lord that sees us in our rightful place and God on his holy throne. This is the fear of the Lord that brings blessing (Proverbs 10 for one of many examples)

It is worth noting, however, that Job was not perfect. Even Jesus said to his disciples, 'don't call me (Jesus) perfect, only my Father in heaven is perfect.' God had many questions for Job that Job was powerless to answer.

## Our Response – what can we do in light of what we read in the Bible?!?

Romans 12.1-2 can make us feel a bit overwhelmed. It says:

'..offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – which is your spiritual worship. Don't conform to any more to the lifestyles of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test what God's perfect and pleasing will is for you.'

This is our starting point. As is 1 Corinthians 13 about love. When we become Christians we are changed and forgiven but (like Job and every other human) we are sinners (Romans 3.23) and so we are on a journey where we allow God to change us through our lives as we become more and more like Jesus. The extent to which we allow God to change and shape us is in some part down to us. The way it happens can also be a choice.. do you want to go for God or does he need to change you?!

As James says, our actions should demonstrate our faith. In Matthew 14.14, we see Jesus looking at the crowds and feeling great compassion for them. As Christians we should be full of love and compassion for all people. The fact that we're not is because of sin. However, if you want more of God's love in your heart, just ask him and he will give it, maybe over time and maybe supernaturally in a very powerful way. Who knows.

Whatever, when the Bible speaks into our hearts we cannot ignore it or turn aside. What practical ways can you make a change, in your life and in the life of poor and needy people in the UK and in the world?