

Good Grief!

“At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said: ‘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.’” (Job 1:20-21)

The news turned tragic. All of Job’s children were killed when a building collapsed on them. The news struck Job with such a force that his sorrow could not be hid. He tore his robe, shaved his head, and worshiped. That’s right! He worshiped.

Job’s sorrow was expressed in the outward practices of his day: in the tearing of his robe and the shaving of his head. In addition, his sorrow prompted him to worship God — a practice exclusively characteristic of believers in God. Job was in sorrow, God was a believer, and Job worshiped God.

Sorrow is an inescapable reality of life. All of us are going to lose loved ones and friends. Some of us may experience those losses by very tragic circumstances. No matter the reason, sorrow happens. We mourn losses because they are just that — losses. At one time these people were gains in our lives. At death, they are losses to us. Even the heroes of faith mourned their losses.

Yet, it can be said that there is such a thing as “good grief.” It is a grief that sees a surpassing purpose to all that happens in life. Job acknowledged while worshiping that without the providence of God he had nothing. For a short (though brief) time, Job enjoyed the blessing of his children, but, by the Lord’s providence, those children were taken from him. He mourned their loss but recognized God’s prerogative. He accepted a greater purpose in the death of his children.

The account of Job’s loss is preserved forever in the pages of Scripture. The words of heartache despite perseverance are repeated countless times at funerals and in devotions when people need to get through some of their most difficult times. Today Job serves as an incredible example for “good grief.” He grieved the loss but did not feel hopeless.

The full account of Job shows the loss of children was the end of his heartache. When his body experienced constant pain as a result of his scabs, even Job’s wife urged him to “curse God and die.” Yet, Job’s incredible expression of faith was uttered from his lips: “I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God.” (Job 19:25-26)

It is both the optimism and the confidence that was on the Apostle Paul’s mind when he encouraged the grieving Thessalonians with these words: “Brothers, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14)

So what is “good grief?” It is the grieving a person goes through over the loss of a loved one. Yet it is done in a manner of confidence and faith that God works all things out for the good of those who love Him. Even death, with all of its heartache, is no match for the surpassing love of God who sacrificed His own Son. That sacrifice brings life eternal and that is how one can experience “good grief.”

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