

Job 1:1-5 - Blameless and Upright

We are going to be diving into many things as we work our way through Job. On the one hand I don't want to get too bogged down in the weeds with these things, but on the other hand there are so many things that should be addressed it's hard to pass them up. We see that in the very first chapter.

The big idea I want to get across this morning is that we need to be very careful judging other people based on the limited information we have about their lives. In our sinful nature we are so judgmental about things we can twist and warp things when we really have no idea. This is true in the church and outside of the church. And that really is to our shame.

Sadly, this judgmental is often seen as a spiritual virtue. In charismatic circles people claim that they have "the gift of discernment" or "a word of knowledge" that so and so has some sort of spiritual problem with knowing almost nothing about them. So they are black balled or treated with utmost contempt. Or others are thrust into positions of leadership because people "just know" they're good. "See, they've got a nice family, they've got a nice house...they must be capable of leading" when we know almost nothing about them.

That's not just a problem in charismatic circles, of course, though they tend to use more spiritual language. It affects all churches and all Christians. I've had people tell me they can read other people without knowing them. That they're a good judge of character without talking to them; that they just have instincts.

You what most of that is? It's presumptuous judgement. It's prejudice. It's arrogance thinking somehow we can know a person's heart with only a few facts. When really all we can know about a person from the few facts we have are the facts we have. That doesn't mean we should set aside gut instincts or initial impressions - but we can't be completely guided by those things.

If Job were alive today, from a simply human perspective, all we would know about him is that he is wealthy, he's got a big family that appears to be happy, and he seems godly. And even from those descriptions, we can wrongly judge a person, can't we?

Oh, so and so is wealthy: Then they can't be happy. Or if they were really godly they'd give that money away. Or maybe they got that money though sinful means. Or it's daddy's money. Christians can't have a lot of money - Christians should be poor. Or in some circles, "If you were really godly, God would make you rich" - that's the false gospel of health and wealth.

Or maybe we judge other things. "Sure they **seem** happy - but I'm sure it's all fake. No one's really as happy as Job's family. All that sacrificing and worship is a show."

And we judge people based on very limited information. This is actually part of the problem with Job's friends all throughout the book: they hammer Job because they **assume** things about his life that they couldn't possibly know. They assume he's sinned. They assume righteousness equals riches and sinfulness equals poverty. They assume his kids were sinful. They assume his devotion to God is show.

And that's really the hitch in the book, isn't it? Job really is this super godly, super wealthy, super happy guy who loses it all and it has nothing to do with his life being a fake. In fact, he loses it all **because** he is so godly.

So we need to be very careful about judging people - in a good way or a bad way - based on limited information. So I want to walk through the description here and make some observations.

1. The most important assessment of your life is God's assessment of your life. Read 1

It's hard to imagine a more amazing introduction in all of the Bible than the introduction we are given to Job. He is presented as the pinnacle of godliness. If we knew nothing else about the man, these 4 attributes alone should give us pause to reassess our lives and where we stand in God's estimation.

Job is described 4 ways. He is blameless. He is upright. He fears God. And he turns away from evil. To some extent this is a poetic framing of who he is. It sort of rolls off of the tongue. But these are also helpful categories for us to consider.

Job is blameless. What does that mean? Well, it This does not mean that Job is perfect.

Ecc. 7:20 Surely there is not a righteous man on earth that does good and never sins.

There are no perfect people, so Job is not perfect. Blameless - as the word implies - simply means that he is not able to be blamed for any obvious sin. Those who know Job the best would look at his life and wouldn't be able to point to any obvious sin. This is similar to the description in the NT that we are to be above reproach. We are to live our lives above the sinful fray where people could accuse us of legitimate sin. We are to be blameless according to God's standard.

Job is also upright. This is sort of the opposite of blameless: Blameless means without obvious sin. Upright means that he clearly walks according to God's commands. He positively does what God calls him to do.

Theoretically, someone could be blameless on the outside - not do anything wrong - but also not do anything right. Not take a stand for righteousness. "I've never fumbled the football" - yeah, but you've also never played the game. Job doesn't sin in obvious ways, but he also does righteousness in obvious ways.

As **1 Tim. 5:25** says: his good works are conspicuous. Not as a show, but just because that's what he does to the glory of God the Father.

Here's where it gets good: blameless and upright are external things about Job. They are two sides of the same external coin. The next 2 descriptions are internal: they are 2 sides of the internal coin.

Job fears God. This is an internal reverence and awe for Yahweh. This is the positive side of saying that he loves the Lord his God with all his heart, soul, mind and strength. Job's devotion to God is not a religious show. Job is not just righteous for pretend. He's not just righteous when he's around other people who worship the Lord. He desires to please the Lord and worship the Lord all day every day from the bottom of his heart.

He fears God which is the beginning of what? Knowledge. Fools hate wisdom and instruction. He loves it.

And he turns away from evil. Again, this is internal - it's a disgust for evil. An internal disgust for those things that are not pleasing to God.

Now, here's the catch. In our struggle to put sin to death there are some sins that are easy for us to put to death and despise. And there are other sins that, if we're honest, we coddle. And it's always easy to judge other people's sin as worse than our own.

So it's easy to gossip to people about how bad so and so's lying is. It's easy to console ourselves that we're not involved in sexual immorality, all the while harboring greed in our heart.

But our desire and prayer should be that we turn away from all evil in our heart. And that our fear of God - reverence and awe of God - would grow.

And here's the kicker. This isn't just an offhand description of Job. This is actually God's own estimation of this man. **Look at Vs. 8, 2:3 Read**

Not only does God give the same evaluation, but he adds two more things: there is none like him in all the earth - more on that in a couple of minutes. But also that Job is filled with integrity. He **still** holds fast to his integrity. He's always had integrity and he still has it despite his devastating trials.

Which brings us back to the basic point: the most important assessment of your life is God's assessment of your life. It doesn't matter if the whole city thinks you're a scoundrel or if the whole city thinks you're a saint. What is God's estimation of you on the outside and - more importantly - on the inside?

You can fool me, you can fool your friends, your family, your spouse. There are people who put on an amazing show of righteousness for decades and in the the end they don't fool God.

Now, as Christians we know that our standing before God rests on the merits of Jesus alone. God doesn't declare us righteous because we are internally righteous, or because somehow our good works outweigh our sin. No, God declares us righteous because we acknowledge we are totally depraved and the only hope we have is to trust that God in his mercy will credit the righteousness of Jesus to our account, and credit our sin to his. We are justified by faith alone.

But at the same time we know that God has called us to a holy calling. He has saved us so that we could live lives of purity that show his glory. The way we reflect the glory of God in this world is through living lives that mirror Job: that we are blameless and upright. That we fear God and turn away from evil.

It's God's assessment that really matters.

2) Some of the godliest people look nothing like us.

Now, this is something we get by way of background, here's what's really interesting about that: Job is not a Jew. He doesn't live in Israel. He lives in Uz, which is probably several hundred miles southeast of Israel in modern day Saudi Arabia. The godliest man on the planet doesn't live anywhere near God's covenant people and quite some distance from the Promised Land.

How did Job come to know God? We really don't know. Job was probably someone who lived around the time of Abraham because here is no reference to the Mosaic Law, or Israel as a land, or the Temple or Tabernacle. That might not sound like a big deal, but if you think about the rest of the OT, the references to those things are hard to miss.

The theology of Job is a little different than what we see in other places of the OT. It's not contradictory, but Job focuses on things other books don't. There's a huge emphasis on suffering, justice, God's sovereignty, omnipotence, omniscience (Garrett, *Job*). There's not a lot of emphasis on atonement, sacrifice, love or mercy. And that's okay.

Let me ask you this: who do you think the most godly person on the planet is right now? Who's the person God would mention to Satan as having no equal?

I think of missionaries in difficult places. I think of pastors that are faithful to the Word of God. Would you be surprised if it were a very successful middle eastern cattle farmer? Because that's Job.

Maybe it's a teenage girl in the slums of China sacrificing what little she has to feed others. Maybe it's a truck driver in South America. Maybe it's a wealthy benefactor who gives millions to orphanages throughout Europe. Maybe it's a charismatic dispensationalist nanny in Russia who lovingly takes care of the children of politicians in the highest ranks of the Russian government. I have no idea who or where this person is.

The point is that often we think we know who the godly people are. They fit a certain framework for us. And what we see in Job is that our preconceived notions of who is and is not godly are turned upside down.

This cuts 2 ways. First, we need to make sure we're not dismissing people out of hand who might actually teach us something about the Lord - however young or old or different they might be from us. Are they believers in the Lord Jesus Christ? Do they hold faithfully to the faith once for all delivered to the saints? Are they seeking to root out sin in their lives and follow Jesus in heart-felt godliness? Then a lot of other aspects of their lives don't matter.

Second, if a sheep rancher in Saudi Arabia can be the godliest man on earth, certainly we should be striving for holiness. Your job, your school, your life, your responsibilities, your physical ailments - we'll see that Job had severe physical ailments - are not some excuse for being lazy in pursuing Jesus.

We run so as to win the prize of the upward calling in Christ Jesus no matter where God has stationed us in life.

So the most important assessment of your life is God's assessment. Some of the godliest people look nothing like us.

3) A person's family is no indication of their godliness.

From the outside, Job's family is really the perfect family. In fact, it's so perfect many liberal scholars believe it can't possibly be a real family.

Here's why: in the OT the numbers 7 and 3 are both numbers of completion and perfection. God rested on the 7th day; in Hebrew to covenant with someone is to 7th with them - complete the transaction. Threes work the same way: holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty - God is perfect in holiness. So if you have 7 boys and 3 daughters you have a family that is doubly perfect. Liberal scholars are sure that Job can't be a real person because he has a family that is too good to be true.

Now, I know most of us don't wrestle with whether or not Job was real, but those people are out there. So let me just say: all that is nonsense. God can bless people however he wants. I think Job was real, his children were real, and tragically his wife and friends were real. The Bible doesn't depict Job's life as without flaw, just that he had a large family. Look at the very end of Job for a minute. **Read 42:12-17**

In God's good providence he blessed Job with another 10 kids - interestingly 7 more boys and 3 more girls. And we're given some interesting information that I think seals that these are not fictitious: we have the names of the daughters. **Read 14-15**

If these kids aren't real, there's really not much of a reason to add the names at the end of the book. They're never mentioned again, they play no substantial role. The last thing you do in a good fictitious story is add a whole bunch of unnecessary detail at the end. You'd just say they lived happily ever after. The author says Jemimah lived happily ever after with an inheritance like her brothers. So did Keziah and Karen-happuch.

So that's a long way to say that theses are real people - which most of you never doubted. The point I want to make is that what a person's family looks like is no indication of their godliness. It might be an indication of how God has chosen to bless a couple, but not of personal holiness.

Who your kids are, how many kids you have, whether or not your kids are faithful to the Lord - those have no bearing on who you are or who other people are.

RC Sproul - who believed in God's sovereignty as much as anyone - once said tongue-in-cheek: how your kids turn out is 90% luck. Many godly parents have prodigal sons. And many pagan parents have believing children.

Same thing is true for spouses. Some of the godliest women are those with the most wretched husbands. You remember Abigail in **1 Samuel 25** who was married to Nabal - whose name literally meant fool? Her wisdom and godliness kept king David from slaughtering her disgusting husband for insulting David.

Who you're married to or not married to. Who your parents are or not. Who your siblings are or not. All of those have no bearing on whether or not a person is blameless and upright, or whether they fear God and turn away from evil.

Now, when I say those things I don't think many of us would admit that we actually think that's the case. But in practice I've seen so many times where people just assume that if one person is godly the other is too. I've done that.

I've assumed that because 2 people come to church regularly both love the Lord. Not true. I've known people who thought a man must be godly and worthy of leadership because he had good looking kids.

Listen, there's a sense in which our family can influence us for good or bad. And where we can influence our family for good or bad. But at the end of the day our standing before the Lord is just between us and him.

4) A person's wealth is no indication of their godliness. Read 2-3

It's hard to put a modern day dollar amount on Job's wealth. It's easily over millions of dollars in modern wealth. But beyond that we can't tabulate it.

This is actually one way we know that Job is one of the oldest biblical figures: his wealth is measured in the size of his animals not in land or gold. This is how the earliest characters in the Bible are evaluated in terms of wealth.

Nabal - the man who David was about to kill and his wife Abigail saved him - had 3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats and he was called exceedingly rich. Job's wealth dwarfs Nabal, and Job lived much earlier.

In any case, what we learn is that wealth or lack of wealth is not an indicator of godliness. This flies in the face of the health and wealth false gospel that says if you are truly godly and truly have faith then God will bless you in material ways. Those who are poor - so they would say - are those who are weak in faith.

That's not true. Job is just as godly when he has 12,000 animals as when he has none. How much money a person has is not indicative of their faithfulness.

And especially in America, we need to be very careful. It's very easy for us to assume that those who do not have money or savings lack those things because they have been foolish or unfaithful. We can easily blame people for their financial situation in moral terms when we don't know their situation.

But we can go the other way too: where we think those with a lot of money can't possibly be godly. "If he were really godly he'd give it all away." "I can't believe so and so bought that thing."

I've talked with Christians who are in business and are really bad at business because they think it's wrong to make a profit. I remember being in business early on and selling things for a large profit margin and feeling bad and guilty. Like we were taking advantage of people.

The owner reminded me that the people we served were not in the poor house. They were paying exorbitant dollars to have shiny rock for their countertops. But more than that, the profit we made put food on the tables of 100 families. Sure he had a nice car and house - but his successful business was the lifeline for many, many people.

As Christians we need to remember that it's wrong to be greedy but it's not wrong to make a profit. **Look** over at **Prov. 31** for a minute.

You remember the Proverbs 31 woman? She's not a real woman - no woman could be all of what she is. The point is that this is a list of virtues that are godly and good. **Read 10-24**

Do you realize the model woman in the Bible is killing it financially for her family? Yes, she opens her hand to the poor and reaches out to the needy. But making a profit is not contrary to godliness. And in our conservative circles we need to hear that a woman making a profit is not contrary to godliness. Nor is having nice things necessarily vanity. She's clothed in purple - the color of royalty.

Part of what makes her so godly is her ability to rightly understand money. She knows how to balance generosity with wise investments.

You remember Lydia in Acts 16 in Philippi? She was the first convert to Christianity when Paul preached the gospel. She was a seller of purple linens. She had a Gucci shop. She was loaded. Enough to house the entire missionary team no sweat. She used her wealth to the glory of God.

The gospel comes to people in all stations of life. Wealthy and poor. Those who are poor should not grumble against their wealthy brothers because they have all the riches of Christ Jesus. And those who are wealthy should be quick to share generously with those who are not because all their wealth belongs to God anyway.

Wherever you find yourself at financially, it is possible to bring God glory, know that what you have or don't have is from the Lord and he expects you to be as faithful as you can.

5) Last point: Although your wealth and family and background have no bearing on your godliness, I want to encourage you that God has put you where he's put you to be a blessing to your family. **Read 1:4-5**

I think it's safe to say that Job's example and instruction rubbed off on his kids. And I think it's clear that God honored his prayers for his kids.

We see in Vs. 5 the personal holiness of a man who is so concerned for his kids he offers sacrifices for them in off chance that they curse God in their hearts. It may be that their sibling parties get a little too carried away and someone says something or thinks something they shouldn't and God is dishonored. In the off chance that that's the case, Job goes to God in sacrificial prayer and pleads with the Lord: "Father, do not hold this sin against them." It's the prayer of Jesus and the prayer of Stephen.

Job is acting as his family's priest. He is the Christlike figure in their lives interceding for them. Praying continually for their forgiveness in the sight of God. That kind of example does not go unnoticed. A lifetime of faithful intercession seems to be rewarded with children who genuinely love each other.

I'll apply this to everyone in just a minute: but especially you dads: this is what we need to be doing for our children - going to God in fervent prayer on their behalf. Praying that the Lord would forgive the iniquity in their heart. Praying that God would be gracious. Thus we need to do continually. Not as a magic formula that our kids would be saved - there's no promise of that here. But the only one who can truly do a work in the hearts of our kids is God. So it's to him we should go.

In a broader sense, God has put us in the family he has put us in on purpose. So let me encourage all of us to pray for your family. Pray for your brothers and sisters and aunts and grandpas. Pray continually that God would forgive the iniquity of their hearts and cursing of their mouths as they, by grace, trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Pray