

Job 21:34 Uncomfortable Comfort – Part 1

The video of this message can be viewed at:

<https://youtu.be/cusxsrBbjEs>

Considering the difference between God's comfort and invalid comfort.

As we all know, Christians are not spared from the pains of life. No amount of denial or speaking it out of existence can remove the unpleasant realities we all endure at times.

While I applaud the efforts that people make in showing comfort to those who suffer, like all things though, comfort has a vulnerability.

It can be false, hypocritical, and invalid.

- ~ **Invalid comfort** looks to surface issues only, to the superficial things, and to what is convenient for the giver. It doesn't like to sacrifice self for the recipient's benefit.
- ~ Therefore, it often lacks grace.
- ~ **Invalid comfort** is more concerned about how the giver feels, than how the recipient feels.
 - There's nothing worse than empty platitudes from an insincere person when you're struggling. Instead of encouraging and strengthening your resolve to remain

steadfast, it, like quicksand, sucks you down into doubt, fear, and insecurity.

- Whereas authentic comfort reassures, imparting a degree of calmness while in the storms of life. It conveys a layer of wellness, of acceptance, and of security of the relationship to overlay the pain being experienced.
- In short, comfort says, *“I’m here for you, and I’m not going anywhere.”*

The Bible tells us of a man named Job, who suffered unimaginably.

Without warning he had his wealth, his property, his possessions, his livestock, his staff, and his children, all destroyed.

He then lost his health; being covered in weeping sores, he was cast out of town to survive on the local rubbish dump with the dogs. He was the target of ridicule, humiliation, and slanderous gossip. As if that wasn't bad enough, his fatalistic wife suggested he "*curse God and die*" (2:9).

- Now, Job had 4 would-be friends who seemed to start out being empathetic and supportive of him in this nightmare (Job 2:11-13; 32:2-5. Bildad, Zophar, Eliphaz, and Elihu).
- But their words soon turned ugly, increasing Job's suffering. These 4 would-be friends were imperfect sinners who lacked the grace, the patience, and the **selflessness** that provides the self-restraint needed for helping someone in Job's condition.

- At every level Job was overwhelmed by the sense of loss, of devastation, of betrayal, of hopelessness, and depression. These 4 men did nothing but accuse Job of all kinds of wrong, attempting to convince him that sin was the cause of his suffering. Therefore, this was God's punishment.

In doing so, they crushed Job's spirit, robbing him of what little dignity he had left. Why, because they were thinking more of themselves than of Job.

- But God's testimony of Job** was that he *was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil* (Job 1:1).

Obviously, these 4 men had it all wrong!

On one occasion, exasperated Job, said to his friends in...

Job 21:34, *How then will you comfort me with empty nothings? There is nothing left of your answers but falsehood (h4604 = treachery).*

- Job quickly picked up on their insincerity, and the worthlessness of their words. He realised that there was betrayal and abandonment in these 4 men.
- For comfort to be of any real value, it needs to be authentic, other-focused, and felt through the recipient's experience.

God's comfort is **NOTHING** like what those 4 men showed Job.

- I've titled this 2 part series "*Uncomfortable Comfort*" because I want us to see that within the uncomfortable times of life, God has real and valuable comfort which **He offers for us to receive**.

It needs to be remembered, that God speaks as one who suffers more than any of us.

- ~ **Shortly** after creation, Adam and Eve believed the lies of God's enemy, and they sinned, introducing death and suffering into the world. Before long, human rebellion was so rampant, that the *LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart* (Genesis 6:6). The original word for "*grieved*" carries the idea of **pain that carves its way into the heart**.
- ~ **Stepping forward** in time, we see unfaithful Israel becoming the source of great suffering for God. *They rebelled against him in the wilderness and grieved him in the desert! They tested God again and again and provoked the Holy One of Israel* (Psalm 78:40-41).
- ~ **In the New Testament**, it was Peter, as we learnt last week from Acts 2, who publicly explained Israel's ultimate wound to God's heart. *Men of Israel... this Jesus, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men* (Acts 2:22-23).
- ~ **God**, better than anyone, knows the deepest pains, and our need for comfort. He knows the betrayal of those who claim to be loyal to Him. He knows the heartache from disobedient children. He knows what is to be slandered, misrepresented, mocked, and

blasphemed. He even knows the pain of having His only child murdered.

- ~ **When God speaks words of comfort**, He's emotionally invested. He's involved because He loves us and cares for us. And because He cares, He feels our pain when we hurt.
- ~ For believers, **we know God gets it, and He understands us in our suffering!**
- ~ This is because God exists within the sufferings of His children. *To this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps* (1 Peter 2:21). As Christ suffered well, so believers also, are equipped to follow Christ's gracious and faithful responses in their suffering.

4 Comforts From God – which we cling to by faith

The 1st comfort is Jesus' Cleansing Forgiveness

In the apostle John's comparison between pretend and authentic faith, in 1 John 1:5-10, he says in verse 7... *if we walk in the light, as He (God) is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin* (1 John 1:7).

- ✓ At the heart of our Christian relationships is a heavenly relationship founded upon Jesus' Cross that binds believers together.

- ✓ Therefore, believers should give evidence to the light of God being real in their lives by **mutually treating each other** in a way that reflects *the blood of Jesus...* having *cleansed us* all *from all sin*. **This is God's forgiveness serving as the foundation of our Christian relationships.**
- ✓ Christian fellowship is to be expressive of God's character and the sufficiency of Jesus power to cleanse us of sin. Therefore, the therapeutic benefits of church community, of fellowship, of our togetherness, inspires us to treat each other as forgiven and precious. **This is because the quality of our fellowship displays what we truly think about God.**
- ✓ Jesus' cleansing forgiveness offers us **security of acceptance by God**. It offers hope for change, hope for rescue, and hope for healing from failed relationships, and the disappointment that follows.

The 2nd Comfort is God's Sovereignty

God remains Governor of the universe regardless of our present condition or state of mind. Even our negative feelings, our lack of understanding, and our confusion over a matter, does not change God's authoritative position in the universe or in our lives.

~ While it's difficult to accept sometimes, nothing happens without God's prior approval.

In Psalm 31:14-15, David accepts God's governing of his time, of the chapters and circumstances of his life. *I trust in you, O LORD; I say, "You are my God." My times are in your hand...*
(Administration)

~ In Job 23:8-10, he shows us his God-centred perspective on God's invisible activity.

⁸ *Behold, I go forward but He is not there, and backward, but I cannot discern Him;*

⁹ *When He acts on the left, I cannot behold Him; He turns on the right, I cannot see Him.*

¹⁰ *But He (God) knows the way I take; When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.*

Sanctification's goal is to achieve precious purity.

We take comfort in our struggles, knowing that God trains *us for our good, that we may share His holiness* (Hebrews 12:10).

~ In Isaiah 45:7, God states, *I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the LORD, who does all these things.*

> While we get hung up on whether God actioned something unpleasant, or just allowed it to happen, He takes ownership of it all.

> Whether God orchestrates disaster or can only see it coming and is powerless to do anything about it, is a futile argument according to God.

This argument is never heard in heaven because everyone in heaven knows that God providentially oversees everything. The beautiful and the ugly times of life are all under His governorship.

~ In 2 Samuel 16:5-14, we read of the time when King David was running from his son Absalom, who was hunting down his Dad to kill him (2Sa 16:11).

- When David came to a town called Bahurim, a man by the name of Shimei came out abusing and slandering while throwing stones at him.
- *Then Abishai... said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and take off his head (2 Samuel 16:9).*

¹⁰ *But the king said... If he is cursing because the LORD has said to him, 'Curse David,' who then shall say, 'Why have you done so?'"*

- David understood the practical implications of God's governing rule over the events of life, over the distasteful things, including other's bad behaviour towards us.
- **At no point is God out-of-touch with our sufferings!**

The 3rd Comfort is God's Presence

If we feel alone, that does NOT mean God is absent.

Psalm 139:7-10

- 7 Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?*
- 8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol (Death), you are there!*
- 9 If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,*
- 10 even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.*

Solomon says in Proverbs 15:3, *the eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good.*

Absolutely nothing escapes God's attention or presence.

Even in the traumatic times of life, when we simply fail to understand any of what's happening, God is there with us!

Think for a moment of Jonah, the wonky prophet for rent. God had to place him in a fish's belly for 3 days and nights (Jon 1:17) before he would obey.

~ Jonah 2:1 records that *Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish...*

~ Not receiving a reply from God, Jonah ends his session of prayer with this...

I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the LORD!” (Jonah 2:9).

Expecting death, he worships God and offers obedience should his life be spared.

~ Finally, God responds to Jonah. *And the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land* (Jonah 2:10).

The fish heard God’s voice, not Jonah. Yet, he did experience the result of God’s response.

~ Jonah was never alone, never unheard by God, and never abandoned, despite how he may have felt during that time.

Even in times of bad decisions, or worse, in times of our disobedience, God remains present. He is the invisible and silent attendant, our constant companion.

> 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 *It is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put His seal on us and given us His Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.*

The 4th Comfort is Heavenly Intercession

Although we don’t get to see or hear this heavenly activity, God assures us that it’s active, and the results are very real.

i. Holy Spirit Intercession

Romans 8:26-27 *Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.* ²⁷ *And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.*

ii. Christ's Intercession

In Romans 8:33, Paul asks, then answers an important question, *Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.*

Do not live in fear of peoples' condemning words against you! Rejoice that *it is God who justifies* you. While others condemn you, God declares you innocent in Christ. Yes, there may be the need for greater obedience, **but God does NOT write you off.**

Romans 8:34 *Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.*

iii. The Father Keeps us in His Love

Romans 8:38-39 *For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor*

powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Summary – 4 Comforts From God

The 1st comfort is **Jesus' Cleansing Forgiveness**

The 2nd Comfort is **God's Sovereignty**

The 3rd Comfort is **God's Presence**

The 4th Comfort is **Heavenly Intercession**

In these comforts we walk by faith in God.