

# BaptistWay Bible Series for June 24: A desperate cry for hope

June 16, 2007

Posted: 6/24/07

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### A desperate cry for hope

- Job 16:1-8, 18-21; 19:1-7, 23-27

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For two semesters of my graduate work, I worked as a student chaplain at a psychiatric hospital. One day, I was working with a teenage group. One of the girls and I were talking. This was her third admittance into the hospital.

She sarcastically mentioned her new bracelet. To my amazement, it was an intensive care unit bracelet. Doctors and nurses had worked for days to keep her heart beating. She had swallowed many prescription pills. She explained to me that the therapists continued to tell her she had attempted suicide.

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She pleaded with me to believe she really wanted to live. “I just wanted to sleep awhile through the pain” she exclaimed. Although she still was a young girl, it seemed her life had been filled with suffering and left her with a feeling of hopelessness. She had experienced many things in her life that were out of her control.

The physical pain and emotional anguish she felt ran deep into her soul. She refused to believe she had attempted suicide. She was not looking for death. Rather, she was looking for a temporary release from her pain. She refused to believe those around her. I looked deep into her blank stare and saw a glimmer of hope. Her words echo in my mind even now as I write her story, “I just need God.”

### **Those who know not speak loudest**

The book of Job is well known to both Christians and non-Christians alike. In times of trouble and suffering, we turn to Job’s life for comfort and sometimes even to justify our anger towards God. Job’s story is one of great suffering and tragedy. When tragedy strikes in the form of death, illness, loss of job or divorce, what do we do? Often, we look to our friends and comforters to share in our suffering.

Like us, Job had three friends come to his aid. Upon first sight of Job, the three friends joined him in his sorrow. They sat in silence and mourned

with Job seven days and nights. It was only after Job broke his silence that the friends attempted to give him words of advice. In Job's eyes, they failed to give him comfort.

What do we do when the advice of friends and mentors only adds fuel to the fire of our anger and resentment? Hurt is deepened when our closest friends seem to be against us as much as the situation at hand.

Job's friends had advised him to repent of whatever sin he had done. From their point of view, he brought this tragedy upon himself. In Job 16:1-6 and 19:1-4, we read two speeches in which Job responds. Job dared to see God in a different light than his friends. Job refused their ramblings and advice. The irony is that Job's comforter, God, also was seen by Job as his adversary. Job, like the girl in the story, chose not to listen to his friends. He sought solace from what he saw as the source of his pain.

### **God as enemy and friend**

Job's cry (in Job 16:7-8; 9:6-7) was against the order of the universe. When one does good, one should receive blessings. When one does not, one should not receive blessings.

This idea was held by many believers of Job's day. It was not, however, working for Job. Job's friends decided he must have committed a sin or this would not have happened. Job claimed innocence in his suffering. Job cries out in chapter 19 verse 6-7. He tells his friends, "God has wronged me ... though I cry ... I get no response." How lonely Job must have felt.

We as Christians draw our strength from God's gentle whispering Spirit that comforts in ways that are mysterious to us. What do we do when we feel as Job did? When there is no comfort in the whisper to be heard? Think back to a time when you felt God was not there. Do you remember how you

felt?

In Job 19:23-27, we read of Job's faith in the promise of redemption. One dictionary defines the word "redeem" as "to get or win back" and/or "to free from what distresses or harms." Job greatly needed God to free him from his distress. What about Job's desire to have God win him back into relationship with himself? Job's anguish is obvious in every speech he makes. More than anything, Job desires God to win back his heart: "I know that my Redeemer (the one who will win my heart back) lives" (Job 19:25). Job's faith in God's character shines through in 19:23-27.

When all else fails, even the God we blame will be the God that will restore. God will win our hearts back. The girl in the story may relate most with Job. Her desire is that Job's words will be true in her life. That God will win her heart.

### **Discussion question**

- How and why is there hope in tragic situations?
- How does God redeem you daily?

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