

Meditation: Finding Comfort in Painful Times

DYG: Message Eight (031123AM)

Five thousand years ago – before the pyramids were finished in Egypt, while ice covered most of northern Europe and glaciers towered over the Los Angeles basin, a man named Job lived in the ancient world of the Bible Lands.

Listen to these words, spoken to Job by one of his three prosecuting friends, perfectly captured and flawlessly recorded in this priceless treasury – God's Word! Job 5.7 is the effort of the three false comforting friends of Job. They were trying to pin down the cause of Job's painful condition. They attached an accusation of sin upon him. As they were doing this, they said something powerfully true.

Open with me to Job 5.7.

Pain is as much a part of life as breathing, eating, and sleeping.

We enter this world painfully crushed and twisted through the birth canal.

We depart this world painfully by age and decay, trudging through the valley of the shadow of death.

Most of us really don't like physical or emotional pain. North Americans consume over thirty thousand tons of aspirin a year. North Americans, who only represent 5 percent of the world's population, consume over 50% of all manufactured drugs, one-third of which work on the central nervous system. We are the most advanced society in the world in terms of suppressing pain. Yet the more we try to shut down pain, the more pain seems to surround our lives. What we really need is not less pain, but a better solution for dealing with it.

So of all the lessons of the **Word Filled Life – Living that life in Painful Times** may be the most relevant of all!

God offers His Presence and Influence to surround every part of my life.

This life is called a Word Filled Life. And that is what we have been studying these past few weeks.

- From the constant changes that filled the lives of Enoch, Noah, and Abraham we found the secret to **Living a Word Filled Life – In Distracting Times**.
- From Moses we learned that in spite of the swirl of life in Egypt, the whirl of life in the desert, and the immensity of life on the 40 year Wilderness wandering camping trip – it is possible to **Live the Word Filled Life – in Busy Times**.

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- From the life of Joshua we saw in God's Word that it is our joyful duty to **Live the Word Filled Life – in Fearful Times.**
- And this morning, in Ruth, we learn from her pain filled life, that it is possible to **Live the Word Filled Life – even in Painful Times.**

Please open to Ruth 1. Ruth is an immense spiritual figure in God's Word. If anyone has experienced pain, Ruth has. She is recorded to have gone through nearly ever major category of life stopping pain. Think about her life with me.

Ruth is a book about a man who made a bad choice by leaving the land of Israel with his wife and two sons. They continue by taking foreign wives for their sons. He dies, the sons die, his wife Naomi is left alone with two foreign daughter in laws.

The book of Ruth opens during the period of the Judges when apostasy, decadence, violence, anarchy and warfare were the norm. Famine strikes Bethlehem which means a house of bread. In this time of need, Elimelech which means my God is King, seems to depart from the plan and desires of God. He takes Naomi which means pleasantness and favor, away from the land of promise and the covenant people of God into the land of Israel's enemies, Moab. With them go their two sons Mahlon which means joy or song, and Chilion which means ornament or perfection. These men seem to have stepped out of the revealed will of God in His Word, by marrying pagan, gentile women of God's enemies.

Away from the land of promise in Moab [descendants of Lot who worshiped Chemosh a god of human sacrifice by burning], Elimelech [my God is King] dies and so does Mahlon [joyful song] and Chilion [ornament of perfection]. After ten years of hardship Naomi [pleasant sweetness] becomes Mara [bitterness]. With all those she ever loved buried beneath the sod of Moab [her husband and two sons]. She finally looks back at the land of promise because food is available in Bethlehem. As she sets off to return home she asks her daughter-in-laws to go back to their families and find a new life. In one of the most touching moments of the Scriptures, Ruth [satisfied, fullness] clings to Naomi and the God of Israel. Orpah [stiff necked, double minded] departs for her people in Moab.

The two main sources of extra biblical history on this period are the widely respected references *Encyclopaedia Judaica* and the *Jewish Encyclopedia* both record the historical note¹ that Orpah and Ruth were descendants of Eglon King of Moab. When Orpah left Naomi forsook the God of Israel, embraced the gods of Moab, married and bore a child and from her descendents came Harafu the mother of the four Philistine giants, one who was named Goliath. It is fascinating to think that David, Ruth's grandson met and destroyed Goliath, Orpah's grandson. The result of a simple turn in the path of life. What a great difference small decisions make.

¹ Quoted from Israel my Glory, Feb/Mar 1993, p. 10.

- ***Ruth knew the Pain of the Past:*** her distant relatives were Lot and his daughter. She was the result of a line of people from an incestuous relationship. She was from a line of people cursed by God to the tenth generation. And to make matters worse, all that was written down and kept in print by God's Word – so it was inescapable.
- ***Ruth knew the Pain of Prejudice:*** she was an immigrant from a marked ethnic background. Her type was publicly singled out as unacceptable – and purposefully excluded from being comfortable in Jewish Society.
- ***Ruth knew the Pain of Poverty:*** she was widowed, she was homeless, and she was left to care for an adult parent who was her mother-in-law, and never had any help.
- ***Ruth knew the Pain of Financial Pressure:*** Ruth had to enter the job market and could only get work at the lowest entry-level low wage work as a temporary. She had to go on to welfare via Public Assistance and only got half of those funds, as she was caring for her mother-in-law.
- Through all that emotional pain, physical weariness, and stress of unknowns Ruth shines as one of the godliest women of the Word Filled Life. Ruth lived a life of faith, hope, and love. How did she do it? Ruth chose to practice a Word Filled Life even in Painful Times by clinging to the Lord in the good times, and the bad – never letting go even when life, people, and her days were hard, lonely, empty, and long!

Ruth 1:14 Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but **Ruth clung to her.**

Ruth 1:16-17 But Ruth said: “Entreat me not to leave you, Or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, **And your God, my God.** 17 Where you die, I will die, And there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, If anything but death parts you and me.”

- ***Ruth was going to hang on for dear life. She found the truth. She met the God of Heaven.***
- ***Everything else – family, friends, future – everything else peeled away. One thing stayed – the revelation of God. That was what she clung to, sought for, and wouldn't give up – for anything.***
- ***Is there any doubt why God made her the great –grandmother of the Man after God's own heart David?***
- ***I guess we can say as the New Testament says Jesus is the son of David. And if so then Jesus is the great-great grandson of Ruth.***
- ***Just think what unbelievable things God will do with you if you decide today to cling to Him.***

1st Samuel is our next stop as we meet Hannah in I Samuel 1, where she is living a Word Filled Life. Hannah means gracious in Hebrew, and that is what she was!

- ***Hannah faced the pain of a difficult home situation:*** a mean and rivalrous woman (1.6) was married to her husband. Regularly that rival Penninah

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Yet she lived in the Old Testament world -- far from spiritual help (Shiloh where the Tabernacle was set up could only be visited once a year).

- **Hannah faced the pain of being childless:** each day she saw everyone else with their children and knew she was missing out on the greatest joys of life because she was childless – and yet she channels all that potential for grief and self-pity into seeking God.
- **Hannah faced the pain of limited resources,** limited time, and limited exposure to God's Word who immerses herself in God.
- Yet here is a woman who seeks for and gets **just 7 verses** and meditates on them so long that they spill out into her prayers. We don't need breadth as much as depth!
- And beyond that, the truth she discovers by her meditation is captured by the Spirit of God and recorded in God's Word.
- Here is a woman who immersed herself in God in the Old Testament become the role model, hero, and mentor of the greatest woman of the Bible – Mary mother of Jesus. In Luke 2.46ff, it is Mary who quotes Hannah who quotes her meditations upon God in prayer.
- Are you immersing yourself in God's Word? Are they spilling from your life? How did this woman live so deeply for the Lord in such a desperate situation with so much adversity and pain?

One simple habit, **meditation -- which meant Hannah “immersed” herself in prayer that flowed from God's Word. Here is a little glimpse into the remarkable Word Filled Life of this precious woman of God.**

- 1st we see she had a habit of prayer -- 1 Samuel 1:10 And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed to the Lord and wept in anguish;
- 2nd we see she prays from God's Word (she quotes 6 Old Testament passages in one prayer quoting from Job 36; Exodus 15; Deuteronomy 4, 8, and 32 twice).

1 Samuel 2:1-10 And Hannah prayed and said: “My heart rejoices in the Lord; My horn is exalted in the Lord. I smile at my enemies, Because I rejoice in Your salvation. **2 “No one is holy like the Lord, For there is none besides You, Nor is there any rock like our God.**

- Exodus 15:11 “Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, Fearful in praises, doing wonders?
- Deuteronomy 4:35 To you it was shown, that you might know that the Lord Himself is God; there is none other besides Him.
- Deuteronomy 32:4 He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He.

6 “The Lord kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and brings up.

- Deuteronomy 32:39 ‘Now see that I, even I, am He, And there is no God besides Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; Nor is there any who can deliver from My hand.

7 The Lord makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up.

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- Deuteronomy 8:17 then you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.’

8 He raises the poor from the dust And lifts the beggar from the ash heap, To set them among princes And make them inherit the throne of glory. “For the pillars of the earth are the Lord’s, And He has set the world upon them.

- Job 36:7 He does not withdraw His eyes from the righteous; But they are on the throne with kings, For He has seated them forever, And they are exalted.
- Job 38:4-6 “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. 5 Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? 6 To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone,

9 He will guard the feet of His saints, But the wicked shall be silent in darkness. “For by strength no man shall prevail. 10 The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken in pieces; From heaven He will thunder against them. The Lord will judge the ends of the earth. “He will give strength to His king, And exalt the horn of His anointed.”

What is going on in your life? Do you live with deep pain?

- ***Like Ruth do you know the Pain of a stained Past?***
- ***Like Ruth do you know the Pain of Prejudice?***
- ***Like Ruth do you know the Pain of Poverty?***
- ***Like Ruth do you know the Pain of Financial Pressure?***
- ***Or like Hannah do you face the pain of a difficult home situation?***
- ***Or like Hannah do you face the pain of being childless?***
- ***Or like Hannah do you face the pain of limited resources, limited time, and limited exposure to God’s Word?***

Through all that emotional pains, physical weariness, and stress of unknowns -- Ruth & Hannah shine as some of the godliest women of the Word Filled Life.

Both lived a life of faith, hope, and love.

How did they do it?

Ruth & Hannah chose to practice a Word Filled Life even in Painful Times by clinging to the Lord in the good times, and the bad – never letting go even when life, people, and days were hard, lonely, empty, and long!

God offers to us a Word Filled Life this morning – even as we go through Pain Filled Times!

Some other Word Filled Lives...

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Flip to the right through the rest of 1st and 2nd Samuel and head to 1st Kings 19. Elijah was in the full time, vocational ministry. He had all the demands, defeats, and discouragements of life. In fact James tells us he was subject to the same passions as all of us experience.

- Yet he who knew the power of God so strongly in his life that he could make the Jordan River dry up and stand still also knew fear so great he could turn and run from it.
- He who was fearless and able to call down fire from God in Heaven was also able to become so discouraged he wanted to die.
- He who stood in front of an entire nation on Mount Carmel, quits the ministry to hide from people in a cave. Yet God rescued him from his fears, refreshed his soul from the darkness he felt, met and spoke to him face to face and translated him to his Heavenly home in a fiery chariot without tasting death!
- How did Elijah overcome his fears, his depressions, his insufficiencies to rate such a powerful ministry and prayer life in God's sight? One word sums up his walk with the Lord -- **meditation, which meant Elijah "listened"** to the Lord in and out of troubles and triumphs. 1 Kings 19:12 and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.
- When on the mountain tops of life – Elijah listened to the Lord, and faithfully followed Him.
- When in the pits of life and all seems dark – Elijah listened to the Lord, and faithfully followed Him.
- When at the end of life and the Lord says I am done with you and it is time for you to go home – Elijah listened to the Lord, and faithfully followed Him.
- Elijah had the same passions and problems as any of us have and he listened to the Lord, and faithfully followed Him.

Elijah learned that when God speaks – we listen. So he simply made himself listen to God, and he never stopped listening. At mountains top times, at cave depths, in fear of life, and in hope of death – each and every pain and fear was an opportunity to listen to the voice of God. NOW LISTEN – when we open this book – God's Word , we can hear the prophets speak, we can hear the apostle's voices, and most of all, we can hear the Voice of Jesus Himself. All this because as He said, My sheep hear My voice!

Keep heading to the right in your Bible to Job 1. Job maintained a Word Filled Life when he was a wealthy businessman, farmer, rancher, and influential citizen. Job practiced a Word Filled Life when he was a busy dad with TEN children. Job lived a Word Filled Life as a faithful husband and a man with close friends. Job preserved his Word Filled Life even -- when he suffered immense financial reversal, when he lost his job, when he learned of his children being killed in a tornado, when he lost his wife's companionship and affection, and even when he lost his own health becoming an invalid shut in at home with open sores that smelled sickeningly of death. **Meditation meant** Job "feared" Job 1:8 Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns **(turns away; puts aside; departs from)** evil?"

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- ***Job knew what God wanted and did it.***
- ***Job knew what God hated and avoided it.***
- ***Job knew God was watching and acted like it.***
- ***Have you found and done that from God's Word? That is the Word Filled Life!***

Next to the Psalms where in the 63rd Psalm we meet David. David is probably the easiest person for any of us to relate to in God's Word – this is because he experienced nearly every emotion you and I ever could feel. He knew the pain of a lost child, the pain of a murdered son, the pain of a wayward son, the pain of a raped daughter, the pain of a traitorous family member, the pain of an unfaithful wife, the pain of a hateful father-in-law, the pain of a bitter employee, the pain of jealous brothers, the pain of disqualification from spiritual ministry...and countless other pains. David also knew the joys of falling in love and marrying a woman he deeply admired, having children that were bright and gifted, excelling in his career as a songwriter and worship leader, earning an immense amount of money, giving sacrificially to the Lord, earning the deep respect, admiration, and undivided loyalty of his friends and co-workers... In short we can say David is among the greatest individuals of ancient history. He is the most well known songwriter of all time. He has written the words to more different songs in more languages than anyone else. His poetry is the most widely held, and known of any poet in human history. His public and personal life is a matter of public record more so than nearly anyone else from the public sector. His royal line is the longest surviving lineage of any nation ever to exist on planet Earth. He is the only person promised that their family would actually survive the Tribulation and be enthroned as the earthly ruler of the Nation of Israel in the Millennium. How did David ever accomplish so much in his lifetime? One habit sets him apart, **meditation meant David “sought God longingly”** Psalm 63:1-2 O God, You are my God; Early will I seek (***to seek early, earnestly, or diligently***) You; My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs (***to long for, faint, faint with longing; The word² seems to mean “has gone blind”, or “gone dark”.*** ***How vivid Hebrew poetry is! Then seek is a most revealing verb. Basically it means longing for the first light of the dawn.***) for You In a dry and thirsty land Where there is no water. 2 So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory.

- As a shepherd boy David chose to follow the Lord as his own personal Shepherd in Psalm 23.
- As a man at his peak of strength and accomplishment he gave all his trophies to the Lord in I Samuel ____.
- As an old man he gave all the credit for the good in his life – to the Lord in Psalm 18.

² Psalm 63 notes by Knight, George A. F., Daily Study Bible Series: Psalms, Volume 1, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press) 2001, c1984.

Daniel was a career politician; his life was lived in the bright spotlight of public scrutiny. Everywhere he went, everyone he met, everything he said – could be and was used against him. He lived for over 66-recorded years in this glass house – and ended with one of the most profoundly influential lives ever recorded in the Bible. **Meditation meant Daniel “purposed”** Daniel 1:8 But Daniel purposed **(to put in place, set, appoint, make; to direct toward)** in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

- So many qualities flowed from that choice Daniel made as a teenager to point his heart at God.
- Daniel started a habit of seeking God by thinking about Him and His Word.
- This led to an amazing prayer life in all the flurry of the height of his career that found him three times daily on his knees! ***Daniel -- one of the busiest administrators of the Old Testament, was also a towering giant among the Old Testament saints. The key to his life from just a teenager? He was in the habit of getting alone with God three times a day.*** Daniel 6:10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, **as was his custom since early days.**
- Then it led to a life long study of the Bible. As an eighty year old he was reading, studying, and praying through God's Word.
- And to the end of his life Daniel was faithful to that purpose that drove his life pointed toward the Lord.

What a TEAM. What a lesson for us. Often however we don’t hear the voice of the Lord in His Word because our lives are too full and too complex. One of the best ways to experience the discipline of meditation – and the immense rewards that it will bring to our lives, is to practice a spiritual fast.

Psalm 119 Divisions

1. **Psalm 119:1-8** Desperate Seeking God's Heart, The Psalmist's Desire, The Psalmist's Dilemma, The Psalmist's Decision-29;
2. **Psalm 119:9-16** How Can I Ever Be Clean? Focus the Heart, Feed the Heart-51;
3. **Psalm 119:17-24** Getting the Most Out Of Life, Learning from the Word, Longing for the Word, Leaning on the Word-69;
4. **Psalm 119:25-32** Burned Out, Burdened Down, and Built Up, Burned Out, Burdened Down, Built Up-89;
5. **Psalm 119:33-40** Prayer That Grips God's Heart, Teach Me, Enlighten Me, Direct Me, Incline Me, Focus Me, Promise Me, Protect Me, Quicken Me-107;

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6. **Psalm 119:41-48** How To Be Confident Without Being Cocky, Conscientious Requests, Committed Resolutions, Confident Results-131;
7. **Psalm 119:49-56** Remember to Remember, Remember the Word, Remember the Past, Remember the Song, Remember the Name-151;
8. **Psalm 119:57-64** My Piece of the Pie, My Portion, My Pattern, My Praise, My Partners, My Perspective-171;
9. **Psalm 119:65-72** The School of Affliction, The Truth Upon Which The School Is Based, The Transcript Required for Admission, The test Given To All Students, The Target of the Curriculum, the Transformation of Value System-189;
10. **Psalm 119:73-80** How To Be Stable In A Shaky World, You Must Have Specific Purpose, You Must Pray, Specific Petitions-205;
11. **Psalm 119:81-88** Almost Consumed, But Not Quite, David's Desperate Plight, David's Divine Picture, David's Definite Pattern-223;
12. **Psalm 119:89-96** God's Absolute Word, A Settled Word, A Saving Word-241;
13. **Psalm 119:97-104** **Loving God; Listening to God; Living God; What he loved, lived, got** Living The Word Of God, What He Was, What He Got, What He Did, What He Fed On, What He Lived-259;
14. **Psalm 119:105-112** Driving through the Smoke of Life: Ezra's Struggles; Ezra's Obstacles; Ezra's Hope; A Light In The Fog, Instrumentality of God's Word, Integrity of David's Word, Illumination of life's Path, Investment in Eternity's Heritage, Inclination of David's Heart-275;
15. **Psalm 119:113-120** **You are my Hiding Place** The Real Hiding Place, David's Focus, David's Fortress, David's Faith, David's Fear-293;
16. **Psalm 119:121-128** In A Position to Appraise The Word of God, In A Position of Obedience, In A Position of Submission-309;
17. **Psalm 119:129-136** **How to live and Extraordinary Life** How the Common Man Becomes Uncommon, Principles for Practical Living, Patterns for Powerful Praying, Product of Prayerful Living-325;
18. **Psalm 119:137-144** **Balancing Life's Demands** What Is Righteousness?, A Righteous Word, An Everlasting Word-343;
19. **Psalm 119:145-152** **Paying the Price for Power with God- wholehearted prayers; unscheduled visits** The Price of Power With God, Cry Unto God With Both Heart & Soul, Seek for God Both Morning & Evening, Trust In God Whether Weak Or Strong, Watch For God Whether Near Or Far, Believe God's Word Forever & Ever-361;
20. **Psalm 119:153-160** How to Deal With Problems Too Big To Handle-379,
21. **Psalm 119:161-168** Power of the Attorney, Plea of the Accused, Principles of Justice-379;
22. **Psalm 119:169-176** Great Peace, Choose Great Spoil, Receive Great Peace, Give Great Testimony-395;
23. **Psalm 119:** Putting It All Together, Petition, Praise, Practice, Perspective-411.

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