

“The Good, the Bad and the Ugly”
Job 29-30 – Part 3

In 1966, Clint Eastwood starred in a movie that some believe propelled him into stardom, *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*. I do not want to take the time to review this movie. However, I do want to use the title, “The Good, the Bad and the Ugly” as a fitting title for these two chapters of Job.

Laying aside his voice of praise of God’s wisdom (Job 28), Job reverts to his past life as he walks down memory lane bringing us to his present condition. What was once a beautiful life is now a marred, ugly and unwanted life. Listen to Job as he bitterly recounts his tale of woe. Perhaps you can identify with some of his feelings.

The Good: To Be Young Again and Full of Life (29:2-25)

Every one of us wistfully retreats to our young life at one time or another (29:2-6). We long for the days when peace and laughter reigned freely as king and queen, when we had no cares, when friends accepted and longed for us and life was full of fun. Our memories are selective refusing to recall or ignoring some of the troubled spots in our youth. Job recalls the days “when the friendship of God was upon my tent” (29:4).

Like the seasons of the calendar, we move from spring to summer with little effort invigorated with energy and lust for life (29:7-10). We welcome everything and everyone as a challenge, as an opportunity, as a time to advance our careers, our families and our name. These are the days when the headhunters search us out as hounds barking for their prey. We become the future leaders in law, business, politics and medicine. People actually listen to us and respect us. Unbelievable.

And why not? Our successes in life precede us like a marching band leads in a presidential parade. In Job’s case, he delivers the poor and the fatherless (29:12). He reaches out to those in grief preceding death and brings joy to their lives (29:13). His rulings in matters of law are just and fair (29:14). Every trouble and transgression that falls at his feet, he corrects (15-18).

As a young person watching old people succumb to death, we hope that we will die surrounded by our loved ones and friends. We hope that we will die in comfort and honor. Life was good to us even at the end; we hope that death will be good to us as well. That is Job’s hope (29:18-20).

One last lingering look at the past leaves us wondering what it would be like to go back, to live at that time again (29:21-25). Men and women waited to hear our opinion. In the brokerage world, we were the E.F. Hutton of the 20th century. When we spoke, people listened. We became a source of life, confidence and comfort to many (29:24-25). Life was grand and like our sun, we were at the center of universe.

The Bad: When Bad Things Happen to Good People (30:1-15)

But life is like a roller coaster. While we go around and around, the coaster goes up and down. Unfortunately, some of the downs plunge us into dark caverns of disaster and utter despair. With little or no warning, the market suddenly drops like a landslide off the side of a mountain burying everything in its path. Or, the doctor grimly enters the room, sits in his chair and without looking at us, speaks to his shuffled papers in sterile clinical tones. “After examining your test results, we’ve concluded that you have stage four pancreatic cancer. I’m sorry. There is no hope.” Or, an unknown person approaches you from a hidden position as you leave your car and boldly asks, “Are you Bumbling Beatle Bully?” Stunned by the unexpected question, you answer, “Yes. Why?” He pushes a set of papers toward you and hastily says, “You’ve been served. Sign here.” Like being punched in the diaphragm, your breath suddenly leaves you as you open the papers to find that your business, the business you built from a boyhood hobby, is now being threatened with a law suit that could cripple you and everyone working for you. Life suddenly turns bad.

Job, his livelihood snatched from him by thieves and uncontrollable weather, his children all killed by a sudden wind storm that obliterated the house where they were celebrating and his health suddenly taken from him leaving him living on a garbage heap scraping scabs and pus from his shriveled skin, now faces the bad.

- Instead of honoring Job by listening to his wise counsel, the young mock him, laughing with disdain for him (30:1-8). These are the sons of men that Job would have never allowed to eat with his sheep dogs.
- People laugh and spit at the sight of Job (30:9-10).
- Because God has humbled him in their sight, they treat him like an animal pushing him around, laying traps for him and taking advantage of his calamity (30:11-13).
- Like an army breaching a city wall, terror overtakes Job. His wealth vanishes like a cloud in the noon-day sun. He has nothing to fight off his enemies (30:14-15), nothing with which to defend himself.
- And then, the ugliness of illness attacks his body with unrelenting vengeance (30:16-23).

The Ugly: When Kids Called Us Names (30:16-31)

As our memories return to us of those early childhood days, our selective memory now focuses like a laser on those events that caused us emotional pain, that caused the tears to flow uncontrollably and caused us to retaliate in the same way that we were attacked, with our tongue. You remember those taunts at recess or on the way home after school. “Hey four eyes.” “You – cross-eyed.” “Fatso.” “Hey black boy.” “Where’d you get those ugly clothes? From the city dump?” “You’re stupid.” “Who’s your real daddy?” “You need a bath. Don’t you ever bathe?” “Hey poor boy.” “You’re ugly. Get away from me.” The taunts go on and on. Suddenly life has turned ugly and we feel ugly. “Sticks and stone may break my bones, but names will never hurt me,” is a blatant lie.

The emotional and physical pain attacks Job’s mind and body like a band of savage wolves attacks a downed animal (30:16-19). His physical appearance is abhorrent to

As iron sharpens items,
so a person sharpens his friends
— Solomon

those that pass by. They want to look away, but their eyes are drawn to Job's pathetic appearance like nails are drawn to a large magnet. Never have they seen anything so embarrassingly ugly as this man sitting in the city dump surrounded by his friends clad in their Stuart Hughes Diamond Edition suits retailing at a mere \$892,500.

Like people in the whirlwinds of trauma, people that I've met in the emergency room, God gets the blame (30:20-23). "What did I do to deserve this? Why did God let this happen to me?" In shock, in emotional and physical pain, people lash out at God. I've watched people sink to their knees knowing that they would end up like Job. "For I know that you will bring me to death and to the house appointed for all living" (Job 30:23).

While we blame God for our situation, at the same time, we call to Him and plead with Him for help (30:24). Then, we begin to justify why life isn't fair to us, why God isn't fair to us (30:25). "Look at all the good things that I've done in my life. Doesn't that count for something?"

As we struggle to find our way out of this confusing maze, we only become increasingly lost (30:26-31). Light is turned to darkness. Surrounded by family and friends, we are all alone in this dry wilderness. What was once laughter and joy as a youth has turned to mourning and weeping and ugliness (30:31).

Life is now ugly. Now, what do we do? How do we manage these ugly moments? From where will our strength come to cope with these events and times?

In all this swirling seemingly unending turmoil, we hear the voice of our God say,

Be still, and know that I am God:

I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

The Lord of hosts is with us;

The God of Jacob is our refuge. (Psalm 46:10–11 KJV)

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