

Faith, not the people

Recently, my ballet instructor made a startling statement.

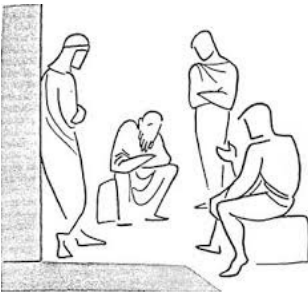
“It’s not the faith but the people that fail.”

Somehow, this statement keeps ringing in my ears. It is only when I dwell into the book of Job did I understand why that statement stayed in my mind for so long.

What did the Bible say?

The first of Job’s friends to speak was Eliphaz (Job 4:7–8). He declared,

“Consider now: Who, being innocent, has ever perished?
Where were the upright ever destroyed?
As I have observed, those who plow evil
and those who sow trouble reap it.”



Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar were sure that Job must have some dirty secret at the root of his newfound troubles. They ‘knew’ there had to be a reason so they badgered him to confess this suspected secret sin. Job knew there was no great hidden scandal in his life (Job 1: 1 - This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil). He was

defensive in the face of his accusers but he also wondered—why? One of the difficult things for us to accept is that many of the sufferings we go through simply cannot be neatly categorised. The ‘why’ is often elusive. Bad things do not only happen to bad people. Job recognised

that many times the wicked live to reach a ripe old age and even appear to prosper (21:7–13).

Seek Growth, Not Vindication

There are many ‘whys’ that we will never know in this life. In trying to explain everything, sometimes we miss the point. Job wanted God to vindicate him in the eyes of his friends. People ridiculed him (30:1, 9) and that is a hard thing for anyone to take. When Elihu began to answer Job on behalf of God in chapters 32 - 37, he pointed out that Job had been focusing on the wrong thing for much of his trials. Elihu explained that God instructs and chastens in various ways. He has His reasons for how He deals with us and sometimes, things are beyond our understanding.

In our trials and tests, James encourages us to ask God for wisdom (James 1:5). If we do so in faith, He will surely give it. Whatever the trial or test, there is always growth that can be achieved. Even Jesus Christ Himself learned by the things He suffered (Hebrews 5:8). God wants us to grow. Therefore, we must undergo periodic pruning to stimulate that growth (John 15:2).



Trust in the Face of Anguish

It is relatively easy to trust God when things are going the way we like them. Quite a different story when things turn upside down and inside out. It is in the midst of such perplexity and anguish that faith in God is sorely tested.

One of the things Satan did not understand about Job was his motive. Satan thought Job only served God because it was to his advantage. He was convinced that if God removed blessings and protection, Job would curse and revile Him. However, that did not happen. Job loved God and served Him out of sincere devotion. He trusted God even when he was feeling abandoned. This lesson of **steadfast trust** is one of the most important aspects of character we can gain from any trial.

Through his trials, Job came to **know God deeply**, not simply to know about Him. He became a far more humble and compassionate man as a result of what he went through. Learning these lessons was the key to his emerging out of the dark shadows of life and into the sunlight once again.

Reflections

“It’s not the faith but the people that fail.”

Throughout my life, there are times I seek support from people and was vastly disappointed when I did not get it from them. In the latter parts of my life, I begin to understand that I had been going around it the wrong way. No one can fulfill all our needs. When we expect too much of the people around us—we glorify them and are inevitably disappointed by them.

Our trials can make us bitter or they can make us better. Which will yours do for you?

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