

Condensed Milk

"...like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation...." 1 Peter 2:2

Job: The Word on Suffering -- Part 20 (Based on Job 5 and 12)

There is one very grating tone in everything Job's friends say to him: pride. It is that condemning attitude toward those who are struggling that says, "You are suffering and I am not because I don't have your weaknesses". We hear it in Eliphaz (5:6), "For hardship does not spring from the soil, nor does trouble sprout from the ground."

It is that attitude that says with self-confidence, "If I was in your marriage it would be a better marriage" or "If I was raising your kids they wouldn't be so bad" or "If I was leading the church it would be a better church". With remarkable resilience and insight Job responds (12:5), "Men at ease have contempt for misfortune as the fate of those whose feet are slipping." They presume they are superior.

I had a fish tank in my office for seven years. In that tank I often had schooling fish that swam back and forth in one harmonious cluster of equals – that is, until one of them showed signs of weakness. You get to know your fish when you watch them every day and I could see when one of them was getting sick. It lagged behind the others or separated itself from the group a bit. When this happened the healthy fish sensed it quickly. First one would take a little peck at it and swim away. Then he'd do it again. Soon another would join him. The weaker the sick fish got the more other fish would join in the pecking until the sick fish was pecked to death.

I've often thought of those fish when I see people turn against a person who is struggling. Why do pastors who are struggling in their churches instinctively sense they are no longer part of the pack of other pastors? Why do people going through family problems hide it from others? It is because we know instinctively that those who are not struggling will presume we are no longer in their class and will turn on us. Surely we can be wiser and kinder than stupid fish.

